

RESIGNATION LETTER FROM NIGERIA

WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAVE A CULT

ProclamationMagazine.com

# Proclamation!

FORMER ADVENTISTS  
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS  
SABBATARIANS  
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

FALL 2017  
VOLUME 18, ISSUE 2

DISCOVERING

# TRUTH

BECOMING ADVENTIST  
AND LEAVING FOR JESUS



COLLEEN TINKER

## THE MARRIAGE OF THE SON

**O**n Saturday, September 2, our younger son Nathanael married his bride Audrey Herwig. The couple was married among people who love them—this is the first wedding within the local Redeemer Fellowship congregation, and church members came to celebrate along with family and friends who travelled for the occasion.

Gary Inrig officiated and pronounced them husband and wife as they stood in front of a white cross—the only decoration on the platform. The service was highlighted with three congregational hymns that articulated Nathanael's and Audrey's commitment to the Lord in their marriage: "O Great God", "Be Thou My Vision", and "He Will Hold Me Fast".

**OUR CREATOR GAVE US MARRIAGE TO REFLECT THE ETERNAL REALITY OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE SON TO HIS BRIDE, THE CHURCH.**

As he spoke, Gary quoted Paul's words from Ephesians 5:25–28:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing: but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.

I thought again that marriage helps us understand what it means to become part of Jesus' body—the bride of Christ. When we realize what Jesus actually did when He paid for our sins and rose from death to give us life, we know we cannot dishonor Him by holding ourselves back from fully trusting Him.

When we really understand who Jesus is and what He has done, we are confronted by a sometimes surprising decision: do we stay with all we have known and loved, keeping peace with our families and friends, or will we, as does a bride, take a new name and become part of a new family in Him?

Becoming part of the body of Christ means we become part of the church—the bride of Christ. This mystery is not fully comprehensible to us in our still-mortal bodies on this decaying planet, but it is reality. Our Creator gave us marriage to reflect the eternal reality of the marriage of the Son to His bride, the church. In marriage, a man marries a woman—one who is like him and yet is different from him. The mutual sub-

mission described in Ephesians 5:21 is an inevitable part of learning to live with those mystifying and maddening differences between the ways men and women think and problem-solve.

Similarly, the church, as Christ's bride, must learn to trust Him and be patient as we wait for what He is doing that we cannot yet see. He is like us—and yet He is different. He is our Savior. We are being purified and cleansed by our Bridegroom so that He can present us to Himself when He returns to take us to Himself forever. We are being sanctified by His love while we wait for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Being part of the bride of Christ, we learn to trust the promises He has made to us. We learn to believe that His word means what it says, and if His word contradicts things we previously believed, we have to know that He cannot lie, and our previous beliefs must yield to the truth He speaks.

In this issue we share a resignation letter Owolabi Paul wrote to his local Adventist church in Nigeria. He explains from Scripture why he can no longer believe Adventist doctrine. Also, Richard Tinker, Carel Stevenson, and Martin Carey each explains a biblical doctrine which he learned as he discovered the gospel. We also share a story by Ann Robertson whose explanation of leaving the International Bible Students could have been written by many leaving Adventism. Sarah Luke appeals to us to follow Jesus, and Rick Barker, Chris Lee, and Lisa Winn also challenge us to walk in truth and reality.

The beauty of the bride is revealed as she submits to the bridegroom's sacrificial love. We pray that as you read this issue of *Proclamation!* you will know the love of our Bridegroom, and forsaking all others, submit to Him and trust His promises as you bear His name in the world.†

## LAST CHANCE

**You must respond to keep receiving your mailing of the printed version of *Proclamation!***

**SEE PAGE 30 FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

## Proclamation!

Vol. 18, Issue 2 • Fall 2017

Founding Editor **Dale Ratzlaff**

Editor **Colleen Tinker**

Design Editor **Richard Tinker**

Copy Editor **Cristine Cole**

Contributing Editors **Rick Barker, Martin L. Carey, Chris Lee, Lisa Winn**

Proofreaders **Carolyn Ratzlaff, Jordan Quinley**

**Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. Board of Directors**

Richard Tinker, President  
Cheryl Granger, Secretary  
Martin Carey, Dale Ratzlaff, Carel Stevenson

*Proclamation!* is published by Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., 1042 North Powderhorn Road, Camp Verde, AZ 86322. Copyright ©2017 Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Editorial Office, phone: (909) 794-9804.

Web: [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org)  
E-mail: [Proclamation@gmail.com](mailto:Proclamation@gmail.com)  
YouTube: [FormerAdventist](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqWz8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8)

**LIFE ASSURANCE**  
MINISTRIES

# ARE THERE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF ISRAELITES AND CHRISTIANS?

**What did Jesus mean when He said to Nathanael, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!”? Are there different classes of Israelites and Christians?**

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And He said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (Jn. 1:47-51).

**T**his is the only time Jesus uses the term, “Israelite.” By studying this passage I believe we can gain some insight that applies to us today. “Israelite”, “deceit” and “you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man” are all allusions to the Old Testament story of Jacob. Jacob was a liar, a cheat and a deceiver. Genesis 27 records the story of Jacob dressing in the clothes of his brother Esau and then going to his blind father, Isaac, and telling him that he was Esau. After Isaac was persuaded that the person in front of him was Esau, he blessed Jacob with the “first-born blessing” that was supposed to be Esau’s. Jacob had to flee

**KNOWING BIBLE DOCTRINES IS NOT THE SAME AS NEW BIRTH. THERE MUST BE A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH GOD.**

home to avoid Esau’s just wrath. In Jacob’s journey to a distant relative, one night he lay down with a stone for a pillow.

He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants” (Gen. 28:12-13).

Some years later, Jacob left his father-in-law, took his wives and livestock, and went toward home. He heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. He was terrified. When he came to the brook Jabbok, brave man that he was, he sent his livestock, wives and children across the brook to meet Esau, but he did not cross.

Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him. Then he said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.” But he said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob,

but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed” (Gen. 32:24-28).

That night Jacob, the deceiver, was changed. His new name “Israel” means that he had striven (struggled, fought) with God and man and had prevailed. Jacob had a life-changing personal encounter with God. And that is what a true Israelite is.

Apparently Nathanael was praying and studying the prophecies in the Old Testament under the fig tree. He had a personal encounter with God. He was an Israelite indeed with no deceit, and his heart was open to the truth.

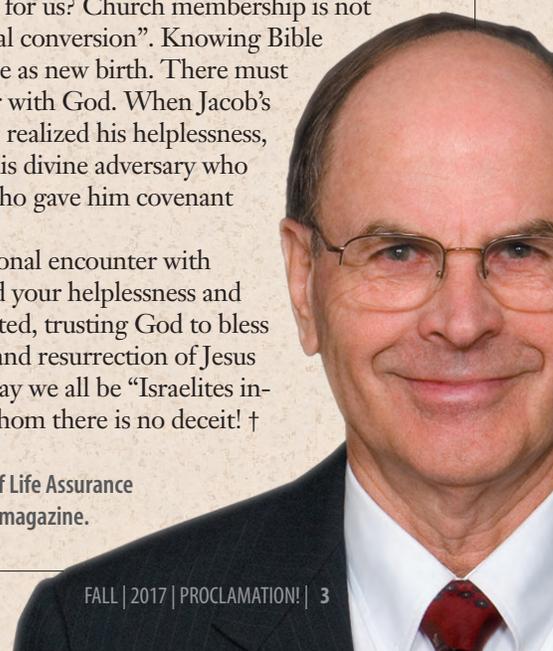
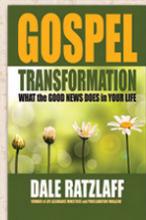
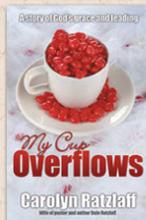
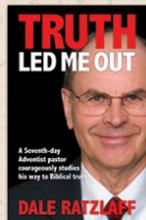
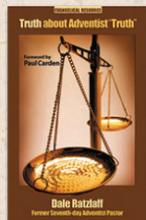
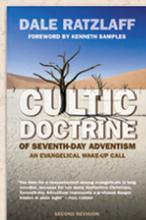
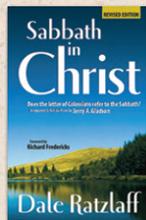
What is the message for us? Church membership is not enough, nor is “doctrinal conversion”. Knowing Bible doctrines is not the same as new birth. There must be a personal encounter with God. When Jacob’s thigh was dislocated, he realized his helplessness, and he just hung onto his divine adversary who turned out to be One who gave him covenant blessings.

Have you had a personal encounter with God? Have you realized your helplessness and sin, and have you repented, trusting God to bless you through the death and resurrection of Jesus in spite of your past? May we all be “Israelites indeed”—Christians in whom there is no deceit! †

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff have authored six books: *Sabbath in Christ*—a volume that explains new covenant Sabbath rest, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*—explores the false Adventist doctrine of a pre-advent judgment that decides eternal destinies, *Truth*

*About Adventist “Truth”*—a little book that’s perfect to give to Christians that need to understand Adventism, *Truth Led Me Out*—in which Dale Ratzlaff tells his own story of following Jesus, no matter the cost, *My Cup Overflows*—Carolyn’s autobiography, and *Gospel Transformation*—which teaches what the Gospel is and accomplishes.

Each of these books is available at [Ratzlaff.com](http://Ratzlaff.com) or by phoning (928) 554-1001.



Dale Ratzlaff is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine.



# RESIGNATION LETTER

**Owolabi Paul has recently resigned his membership from Seventh-day Adventism. After intensive study and the contextual reading of the New Testament, he has fallen in love with Jesus and His cross. This article is his official letter of resignation.**

**T**he last five years of my life have been incredible. I could never have seen what they would bring when I first made a personal commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist church and its mission. At the time, that seemed to be the best decision I had ever made.

As an Adventist, I grew in knowledge and zeal, and then I came to know about ALIVE Nigeria. ALIVE stands for Africans Living In View of Eternity. It is a supporting ministry of the Adventist church, and it has chapters in many African countries. ALIVE Nigeria was for me a platform to fellowship with likeminded people who had the same passion and zeal for Adventism. It gave me an opportunity to learn a lot and to do a lot. ALIVE motivated me to go deeper and deeper still into Adventism, its history, and its theology. It was always a delight for me to peruse literally thousands of pages and hundreds of sermons to gain deeper knowledge of Adventism.

During my time with ALIVE Nigeria, I made a decision to be an Adventist apologist and determined to know everything that would enable me to defend the doctrines and preach them with clarity and conviction. In fact, I believe everyone that knows me could testify to my deep love for Adventism and its message and to my desire to defend it against “Babylonian” objections.

ALIVE Nigeria gave me more than intellectual armament; it showed me committed people willing to sacrifice for Adventism. Being involved encouraged me to make all my decisions for the sake of the Adventist mission and message. In fact, all my life was literally given over to this cause, and I made many difficult decisions that resulted in my parents and friends becoming angry.

I had always believed in historic and traditional Adventism and was convinced that all other variants were false. I read thousands of Ellen White passages to learn how to live the Adventist life in these last days when the heavenly records are being investigated, and I taught this Adventism to others. I conducted many Bible studies, and I was often invited to local churches to challenge members to commit themselves to the Adventist message—with huge success.

## Questions I could not ignore

Early this year, however, I began a focus of study that led me to a place I never expected to go. I poured myself into Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, and finally into the epistles of John. These studies led me to ask many questions. Committed to defending Adventism, I devoted all my energy into thinking through the biblical evidence I was reading. To my shock, however, my study led me on a path I never thought I would tread.

Moreover, as I was discovering things in the Bible that I had never expected to see, my love of Adventist history led me to look closely at some details which Adventist church leadership has tried to sweep under the rug. To my surprise, there are

**I HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED IN HISTORIC AND TRADITIONAL ADVENTISM AND WAS CONVINCED THAT ALL OTHER VARIANTS WERE FALSE. I READ THOUSANDS OF ELLEN WHITE PASSAGES TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE THE ADVENTIST LIFE IN THESE LAST DAYS WHEN THE HEAVENLY RECORDS ARE BEING INVESTIGATED, AND I TAUGHT THIS ADVENTISM TO OTHERS.**

# FROM NIGERIA

OWOLABI PAUL

many nearly-forgotten facts which nevertheless have a negative impact on Adventist claims. As someone who has read thousands of pages from Vance Ferrel, William Shea, Stephen Bohr, Amazing Facts, Dennis Priebe, Eugene Prewitt, David Shin, and the Biblical Research Institute, I thought I would be able to find easy answers to my growing concerns.

On the contrary, my studies led me to believe that the foundational doctrines and the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are unbiblical, and I had to leave. Moreover, my studies did not just lead me out; they led me to the true knowledge and experience of the apostolic gospel of Jesus Christ, and this discovery has been the best thing that has ever happened in my life. I have seen the gospel clearly in its simplicity yet its profundity.

## **Conclusions that undermine Adventism**

Just as I used to be committed to explaining Adventism, I now believe I must share what the Bible has taught me. Following are some of the conclusions from my months of study, and these conclusions have disproven Adventism's unique teachings and have undermined its identity.

Of central importance is the truth about Jesus. At His ascension He entered into the very presence of God and sat at His right hand. He has been there since his ascension and will be there until His second coming (Heb. 1:3; 4:16; 6:19,20; 8:1,2; 9:7,8,12,24; 10:19,20; 13:11,12).

The atonement of Christ was completed at the cross where He cried, "It is finished." He did not just begin the atonement there,

but He finished it at the cross where His blood was spilled as the means of our redemption (Heb. 1:3; 9:12, 28; 10:14; Jn. 19:30; Rom. 3:25).

Christ did not go to heaven to stand and minister and plead and do some further work of atonement, but when He entered heaven, He sat down waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool (Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2; Rev 3:21; Mk. 16:9; Ps. 110:4).

The event at the cross where Christ spilled His blood is the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. Christ's sacrifice does not have a parallel with the daily ministrations of the priests but with the work of the High Priest (Heb. 7:23–27; 8:6; 9:6–14; 10:12–14).

Christ is not a priest after the order of Levi but after the order of Melchizedek; His ministry is not a parallel to the Levitical priesthood but a contrast to it. Christ is better than angels, than Moses, than Levitical Priests—He is better than every other thing in all creation (Heb. 7).

Through His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has completed the atonement and has perfected us forever (Heb. 10:14).

## **Righteousness and judgment**

In the heavenly sanctuary, there is no veil; therefore, there is no differentiation between a holy place and the most holy. The veil prevented the people and the ordinary priests from gaining access to the presence of God, but in the new covenant there is no veil. We enter straight into the very presence of God where Christ has already entered before us (Heb. 4:14–16; 10:19–23).

There is no “final atonement” in which sins are forgiven but still recorded, waiting to be blotted out on the basis of good works, confession, and a perfect life (Ps. 51:9; 103:12; Mic. 7:19).

Our sins are blotted out the moment we put our faith in Jesus, and God no longer keeps record of them. Our sins and iniquities are remembered no more (Heb. 8:12; 10:17,18; Acts 3:19,20; Rom. 4:3–6).

Acts 3:19 teaches blotting out of sin at the time of repentance, and 1 Peter 4:17 uses “judgment” to refer to the sufferings and persecutions of believers (see 1 Pet. 4:12–19).

Our salvation does not depend upon living a perfect life so as to stand in the judgment. Instead, it depends on the finished work of Christ on the cross where he has perfected us forever. We are saved by the doing and dying of Christ (Rom. 3:21,22; 4:3–6; 5:12–21; 9:30–31; 10).

Judgment occurs now in people’s reaction to the message of the gospel (Jn. 3:16–9, 36; 5:21–24; 12:48). Judgment will then be publicly revealed at the last day at Christ’s coming (Rom. 2:5; 14:10–12).

Those who have put their faith in Christ have no fear for the judgment (1 Jn. 4:15–19; 2:28; 1 Thess. 5:9).

For those who trust in Christ, the verdict of the final judgment has already been given to them; they are justified (Rom. 5:1; 3:24–26; 8:1, 33,34; Jn. 5:24).

Christians can have assurance of salvation now. We can know now that we have eternal life and no one will snatch us from the hands of the Father and the Son. We are not to wait in fear for any concocted pre-advent judgment and then hope we make it (Jn. 6:37–40; 10:28; 1 Jn. 5:13).

The righteousness that saves us is an imputed righteousness, an external righteousness outside of ourselves. We are not saved by grace initially and then by works; we are not saved by God’s grace helping us to overcome and be holy. Instead, we are saved by the life and death of Christ, and His righteousness is always and forever imputed to us (Rom. 5:10–21; Gal. 3:10–14; 2 Cor. 5:14–21; Phil. 3:9–10).

We are not saved by our perfection in the “final atonement”, we are saved by His perfection now and forever (Heb. 10:14; 7:19; Col. 1:28; 2:10).

The gospel is not Christ showing us an example to follow perfectly and thus be saved. Rather, the gospel is Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection according to Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3–4). It is Christ as our substitute; we are saved by his life (Is. 53; Rom. 5:9–10; 1 Pet. 2:20–25; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Christ did not have a sinful nature. He had a human nature subject to temptation, weaknesses, and frailties, but He did not have the propensity or moral tendency to sin. He is the spotless Lamb of God (Lk. 1:35; 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15; 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19).

## Daniel and the Little Horn

The context of Daniel 8 is not of an atonement that is to be made in 1844 but of the activities of a wicked power that desolates the temple and tramples the people of God and puts an end to the daily sacrifice (v. 10–13).

What defiles the temple in Daniel 8 are the activities of the little horn, not the confession of the sins of God’s people. Only an out-of-context study of Daniel 8 yields an investigative judgment (verses 10–13, 24–25).

In Revelation 14, there is no mention of believers being judged; it is Babylon, the enemy of Christ and His church that is being judged (Rev. 14:7,8; 17:1,16; 18:2–24; 19:2,17–21).

The Hebrew word for “day” (*Yom*) is not in Daniel 8:14; the verse refers to 2300 evenings and mornings (*ere boqer*).

The day-for-a-year principle is a false prophetic principle. Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 say nothing about a day being a year for prophetic studies. Numbers talks about God punishing Israel in the future for 40 years because of what they did in the past—spying the land for 40 days. Ezekiel 4:6 is about a punishment for 40 days in the future that correlate with Judah’s sins for 40 years in the past.

The Hebrew word *tsadaq* is wrongly translated by the KJV as “cleansed”. The word means “to be just, be righteous, to be justified, to be put or made right”. This is why newer literal translations don’t use the word “cleansed” (NET, made right again; ISV, restored; ESV, restored to its rightful state; NIV, reconsecrated; RSV, restored to its rightful state).

There is no connection between Daniel 8 and Leviticus 16 at all.

The little horn of Daniel 8 comes from one of the four divisions of the Grecian kingdom, not Rome (v. 21–26).

The word “day” does not occur in Daniel 9, either. Instead, the reference is to “seventy sevens” (*Shabua shabua*). In Daniel 10:2,3, when the “seven” refers to seven days of weeks, it was clearly stated in the verse.

The word *Chathakc* used in Daniel 9:24 means “to be determined, be decreed, be settled, be marked out”. Most translations have “determined” rather than “cut off”. Even if “cut off” is the right translation (a big IF), it is not conclusive that it refers back to Daniel 8. In short, the Adventists’ arguments for the day-for-a-year principle are in error for two reasons. First, the word “day” is not in Dan 8:14 or 9:24; second, the context of Daniel specifically and the Old Testament generally shows that day-for-a-year is not a legitimate interpretation of these prophecies.

Furthermore, the New Testament which interprets the Old is conclusive that Daniel 7 was fulfilled at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18; Acts 2:32–36; 1 Cor. 15:25,27; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 1:5).

In summary, Adventist historicism founded on the day-for-a-year principle is flawed. It always tries to fuse historical events and dates to match up with prophecy. In fact, the 1919 Bible Conference minutes detail disagreements even among Adventist scholars as to which date or which event fulfills what prophecy. Historicism has to rely on debatable and made-up dates, some of which correlate with nothing. Examples of debatable dates include 457 BC, AD 27, AD 31, AD 508, AD 538. Dates with fused events include 408 BC and AD 34. (See also Litch, August 11, 1840).

The last days did not begin at 1798 or 1844 but at the coming of Christ (Heb. 1:2). The New Testament believers were living in the last days (1 Cor. 10:11; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:37; 1 Jn. 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 22:20).

# ...THE ADVENTISTS ALWAYS BELIEVED THEY WERE RIGHT AND SOUGHT TO MANIPULATE THE BIBLE BY INVENTING THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT TO PROVE THEIR POINTS, EVEN BLAMING GOD FOR COVERING MILLER'S MISTAKE BY TEACHING ELLEN WHITE'S EXPLANATION THAT GOD HELD HIS HAND OVER MILLER'S ERROR IN DATE-SETTING FOR THE PURPOSE OF STIMULATING PEOPLE TO "GET READY" FOR JESUS' COMING.

In fact, as far as atonement was concerned, Christ could have come in the first century; He did not need to wait for a "final atonement" because it was already finished! (Rev. 22:12,20; 1:7; Heb. 10:37).

## **Date Setting**

In disobedience to the words of Jesus, those who became Adventists participated with William Miller's date-setting for the return of Christ (Mt. 24:36, 42,43,44; 2 Pet. 3:10). Moreover, they labelled the churches that would not accept their dates, Babylon.

Instead of repenting when the dates proved wrong and Jesus didn't return, the Adventists always believed they were right and sought to manipulate the Bible by inventing the investigative judgment to prove their points, even blaming God for covering Miller's mistake by teaching Ellen White's explanation that God held His hand over Miller's error in date-setting for the purpose of stimulating people to "get ready" for Jesus' coming. In fact, William Miller used poor hermeneutics in his proof-texting Bible study method. He has gone down in history not as a great servant of God but as a delusional date setter.

The investigative judgment contradicts the Scriptures and was a face-saving device for early Adventists who, in their extremism, taught for seven years that the door of salvation had been closed on all other churches.

Because of their inability to understand Scripture and their use of proof-texting, they established an intricate system of errors which built and depended upon each other. They pitted themselves against other Christians and devoted themselves to stealing sheep by whatever means they could.

## **A better covenant**

The message that prepares the world for the coming of Christ was preached in the days of the apostles, and it is the same message

that we should preach now—the grace of God in saving us through the finished work of Christ: His death, burial, and resurrection. This is the gospel, "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 15:1–4; Rom. 1:16–17; Col. 1:27–29).

Christ inaugurated the new covenant when He died and rose again, and believers are no longer under the old covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6–12; 10:16–20).

The old covenant has ended (Heb. 8:7–9; 13; 10:9; 2 Cor. 3:7–11; Gal. 3&4). In fact, it was a temporary institution that lasted only until Christ came (Gal. 3:19–25; Gal. 4:1–4; Rom. 10:1–4).

Believers are no longer under the old covenant either for justification nor for sanctification (Rom. 7:4–6; 6:15; 1 Tim. 1:6–9; Acts 15; Heb. 8:7–9; 13; 10:9; 2 Cor. 3:7–11; Gal. 3&4; 5:1). In fact, to be under the old covenant is to be cut off from Christ (Gal. 3:10; 5:1–4; Rom. 9:30–33).

The old covenant was given only to Israel (Deut. 4:6–45; 5:26; 7:6–11; Rom. 9:4; Neh. 9:14; Ps. 103:7; 147:19,20). Significantly, it was not even given to the patriarchs before them (Deut. 1:8; 5:3; 6:10; Ex. 3:15; 4:5).

Furthermore, no one kept the Sabbath before Exodus 16. The rest of Genesis 2 is God's rest, not man's (Heb. 4:4). Moreover, the day God rested was Adam's second day. The rest of Genesis 2 was not meant to end (the seventh day had no evening and morning designation), but the incursion of sin flawed the "very good" finished work and ended the rest (Jn. 5:17).

Importantly, the new covenant is not a continuation or a modification of the old; instead, it declares the complete end of the old (Heb. 8:7–9; 13; 10:9; 2 Cor. 3:7–11; Gal. 3 and 4).

Furthermore, the Bible does not divide the old covenant law into parts as we have taught it. Indeed, neither the Bible nor Jewish scholars know of such a distinction. All the law was given by God and is indivisible; we cannot pick and choose parts of it to keep and parts to dismiss. Jesus even affirmed the totality of the law when He said that not one jot or one tittle of the law would disappear until all was fulfilled (Mt. 5:18). In fact, the

Ten Commandments are the actual words of the covenant (Ex. 34:28; 31:18; Deut. 4:13; 9:9–15; 1 Kg. 8:9,21) while the other laws are expansions, explanations, and applications of those laws (Deut. 29:1–9; Ex. 24:7). They are all the law of God. They are all obsolete because of Jesus' fulfillment of them (2 Cor. 3:6–11; Heb. 9:1–4; Heb. 8:7–9,13).

The moral principles of the Ten Commandments that are relevant to believers in the new covenant are well-stated in the epistles (Rom. 13:9; 1 Tim. 6:1; 1 Jn. 5:21; Acts 17:29).

The law was given to the Jewish community, and without being circumcised, a person was not considered Jewish. In fact, the uncircumcised were not allowed to keep the Sabbath or the other feasts. Thus circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws were the major dividing lines between Jews and Gentiles, but these are all removed in the new covenant in Christ's blood, the covenant that we now teach to all the world (Acts 15; Col. 2:9–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; Acts 10; Mk. 7:14–23; Eph. 2:1–16).

The new covenant law is the law of love expanded and explained in the epistles and interpreted by the Holy Spirit. The new covenant is not based on rigid, legal rules written on stone or in a book. Instead, it is the work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer (Rom. 13:10; Mt. 22:40; Jn. 13:34,35; Gal. 5:14, 16; Jas. 1:25; Rom. 8).

Moreover, new covenant sanctification is not defined by perfected law keeping, as Adventism teaches. Christ is our standard, not the Mosaic law. Now the indwelling Holy Spirit teaches believers to behold and meditate on Christ's person and work; we consider who we are in Him as revealed in His word, and the Spirit uses these truths found in Scripture to transform us into the image of Christ. We get sanctified in the happiness of the assurance of salvation, not in the fear and drudgery of hoping eventually to become obedient enough to be saved (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:1–4; Col. 3:1–5; Eph. 4:32; 5:2,22,25; 6:1; Jn. 15:12–15).

The Sabbath is not the seal of God in the new covenant; the Holy Spirit is the seal of God (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22). Sunday-keeping is not the mark of the beast (Jn. 20:17–19; Acts 20:7; 2:47). Furthermore, there is no commandment to keep the Sabbath in the new covenant; there are no instructions on Sabbath keeping given to new gentile believers anywhere in the New Testament. Conversely, Sabbath-breaking is never mentioned in any of the lists of sins in the New Testament.

The *Sabbathon* of Colossians 2:16 definitely refers to the weekly Sabbath (1 Chron. 23:30–31; 2 Chron. 8:12–13; 31:3; Neh. 10:32–33; Num. 29; Ez. 45:17; 44:24 Hos. 2:11).

The “days, months, years and seasons” of Galatians 4 definitely refers to the Jewish calendar. The context can yield no other conclusion (Gal. 3–4). In fact, Sabbath-keeping has no importance in the epistles, the portion of the New Testament devoted to teaching Christians how to live.

The rest described in Hebrews 4 is what we enter when we believe in Christ; this is the rest Jesus described in Mathew 11:28–30. It is not the seventh-day rest of the Jews nor the rest of Canaan given by Joshua; instead, it typifies the eternal rest in heaven (Heb. 4:1–11).

Adventism often appeals to Paul's Sabbath meetings recorded in the book of Acts, but they were in a synagogue context. Paul always went first to the Jews in every city in an effort to bring them the

gospel message so they could believe in the Lord Jesus (Acts 13:14, 43–44; 14:1,2; 15:21; 17:1,2; 16:12–14; 18:4).

Finally, Sunday-worship did not originate with Rome in the fourth century. Rather, meeting on the first day began with the Greek churches and was already well-established in the second century.

Pagan Rome knows nothing of a weekly day of rest or weekly worship of the sun. There were no fixed intervals for worship in ancient Rome, but they worshiped the sun irregularly, just as they worshiped Saturn. It is the “catholic” (universal) church that inaugurated worship on the first day of the week, not the Roman Catholic Church.

### Three Angels' Messages

The urgent message for the world is not Sabbath; it is not perfection, nor is it the investigative judgment. Rather, the message for the world is what Christ has done (1 Cor. 15:1–11; Matt. 24:14).

The first angel's message (Rev. 14:6–7) is not about any investigative judgment. Instead, it is a message that has been preached since apostolic times, not a message for which the church had to wait 1800 years. The first angel's message proclaims the pure apostolic gospel that includes the fact that men are judged (1 Cor. 10:11; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:37; 1 Jn. 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 22:20).

The second angel's message (Rev. 14:8) is a declaration of Christ's victory over a false religious system—Babylon. Babylon represents any religious system that compromises the gospel and does not honor Christ, and the second angel announces that the world's false religious system has fallen.

Then, as soon as the second angel has announced the destruction of false religion, the third angel delivers his message (Rev. 14:9–12). He declares that those who oppose Christ and His gospel will be destroyed. In fact, all who oppose the Lord Jesus are aligned with the beast and his power, and the third angel describes their eternal punishment and suffering. Nowhere is a day of worship even mentioned in these three angels' messages. What is clear is that those who come out of false religion honor the Lord Jesus and His gospel; those who are destroyed refuse to trust the Savior and His completed atonement (Rev. 14, 17, 18, 19).

The faith we are to proclaim is not Sabbath; it is the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jd. 3; 2 Tim. 3:17).

The beast from the sea in Revelation 13 represents political powers, power structures, and ideologies that place themselves against the cause of Christ as Daniel foresaw in Daniel 2 and 7. The beast from the earth in the same chapter is lamb-like. It performs signs and even causes fire to fall from heaven, mimicking Christianity but drawing people to worship the anti-Christ instead of Jesus Himself. It turns the nations away from Christ (Rev. 13:11–14).

### Points of Adventist Confusion

It is crucial to see this fact: there is no National Sunday Law established by the United States that will separate true and false believers. The gospel does that.

# NOWHERE IS A DAY OF WORSHIP EVEN MENTIONED IN THESE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THOSE WHO COME OUT OF FALSE RELIGION HONOR THE LORD JESUS AND HIS GOSPEL; THOSE WHO ARE DESTROYED REFUSE TO TRUST THE SAVIOR AND HIS COMPLETED ATONEMENT.

God's true children are not sealed when a Sunday law goes forth; they are sealed at the moment of their new birth by the Holy Spirit because God knows those that are His (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; Jn. 2:22–24; 2 Tim. 2:19).

Furthermore, there is no eschatological latter rain to be given to those that are perfect. In fact, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter applied Joel 2 to his time. The last days began with the apostles when the indwelling Holy Spirit was first poured out and the church was born (Acts 2). To this day, the Holy Spirit is poured out on every saint that believes at the moment of belief (Acts 2:16–21; Rom. 8:14; Jn. 14:26).

Moreover, the remnant of Revelation 12 refers to no denomination. Rather, the remnant consists of believers who have truly trusted Christ for their salvation. Denomination is not in view; only trusting in Jesus no matter how intense the obstacles defines God's remnant (Rom. 10:5–12).

The commandments of God as used in Revelation 12:17 are not the Ten Commandments of old covenant law. Christians are not under the old covenant. In fact, the word *entole* (Jn. 10:18; 12:49,50; 13:34; 14:15,21,31; Jn. 15:10,12; 1 Jn. 2:3,4,7,8; 3:22–24; 4:21; 5:2,3; 2 Jn. 1:4,5; 2 Jn. 1:6) as used by John refers to the sayings and teachings of Jesus, never to the mosaic law. Importantly, whenever John refers to the law, he uses the word *nomos* (Jn. 1:17,45; 7:19,23,49,51; 8:5,17; 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; 18:31; 19:7).

Importantly for people who have been Adventists, we need to see that in Revelation, the “testimony of Jesus” is not the visionary legacy of Ellen White. Rather, it is exactly what the words say: it is the proclamation of Jesus, His person, and His work (Rev. 1:1,2,9; 6:9; 20:4). It is Jesus' own testimony about Himself, and it is the testimony of Him as it is found in His word that His apostles and all His followers bear in the world.

Revelation contains many Old Testament imageries because it was written with the Old Testament as the background. Temple imageries, therefore, appear frequently, but they must be understood in the light of the didactic teachings of the epistles, because the New Testament reveals what the Old Testament temple represented. Symbols are interpreted by clear didactic passages, and the Old Testament is explained by the New Testament.

Moreover, the 1260 days do not refer to 1260 years. There is no day-for-a-year principle in the Bible. The three-and-one-half years of Revelation are images from the Old Testament (as in the cases of Elijah in 1 Kings 18 and in Daniel) which represent a period of tribulation.

Finally, the Scriptures condemn proselytizing new covenant believers by placing them on an old covenant “diet”. The great commission is for us to expend our efforts on the salvation of unbelievers, not on using concealed methods to win other believers to a religion that will place them in bondage. Of course, even believers need to be engaged in constant dialogue on issues that matter, but never are we to spend our efforts attempting to bring true Christians into a religion that will put their salvation in doubt and bind their consciences to laws and elemental principles that are obsolete in the new covenant (Gal. 2:4; 4:17,18, Col. 2:8–23; Phil. 3:2; Acts 15; Jd. 4). We are never to bring Christians into bondage to the old covenant law.

## Ellen White

Ellen G. White (EGW) taught wrong doctrines; she taught the investigative judgment and all its baggage, and she taught the Sabbath as the final test for new covenant believers.

Furthermore, Ellen White taught that the door of salvation was shut to unbelievers after 1844. Even worse, she said that God showed her this heretical idea in a vision. She even said she saw angels guiding Miller's studies, thus making the angels accomplices to theological errors. Later, Ellen White was involved in attempts to suppress her early “visions” that taught the “shut door” and also consciousness after death.

On top of her claims that God gave her false information in visions, Ellen White plagiarized heavily. She copied from other authors like William Hanna, Alfred Edershiem, Conybeare, John Harris, Daniel March and many more, even losing \$3,000 in a plagiarism lawsuit. She even copied from those closest to her—for example, James White, Uriah Smith, and J N Andrews—without giving them credit, either. Additionally, many of her health visions contained ideas she got from others—and she obviously copied their errors, too.

She not only copied other people extensively and denied doing so, but she also put her “borrowed” words into the mouths of angels!

Over the years EGW changed some of her views on issues which she had previously claimed were given to her by angels. She further confused reality by mixing the gospel with her legalistic counsels.

Furthermore, there are many contradictions and inconsistencies in her writings, and many of her prophecies were unfulfilled. (They were not conditional prophecies.) In fact, she wrote some of her testimonies under the influence of others who were telling her what to say.

In a serious breach of trust, the Adventist organization has been guilty of sweeping under the rug the 1919 Bible Conference where many leaders expressed their reservations about her and where many, such as A. G. Daniels and W. W. Prescott who knew how she compiled her books, gave some strong observations which the church chose to ignore. Similarly, different studies that demonstrate her plagiarism have been kept away from the Adventist members since the 1950s. In fact, many of her errors and mistakes have been glossed over and explained away or denied.

The Adventist organization has claimed too much authority for her and has functionally placed her writings and interpretations above the Bible. Describing her and her writings with such terms as “infallible commentary”, “infallible interpreter”, “continuing and authoritative source of truth”, and as having “prophetic authority” is definitely giving her authority equal to the Bible’s and is placing her biblical explanations over the Bible. Many people, such as W. W. Fletcher, Ballenger, L. R. Conradi, Desmond Ford, and others have been dismissed because their Bible studies conflicted with Ellen White’s claims—claims which almost never are accompanied by supporting biblical exegesis.

## Where This Has Led Me

I could literally go on and on. These highlighted points are in no way exhaustive. In fact, many of these points can be expanded into pages of material. I have documentations for every claim



**Owolabi Paul** lives in Kwara state, Nigeria. His father converted to Adventism when Paul was young; he and his mother and siblings, however, were nominal members. As a university student Paul deeply embraced Adventism, but Christian roommates influenced him to read God’s word seriously. He began reading the New Testament contextually and found it revealed the errors of Adventism clearly. He discovered the gospel and the new covenant, and he fell in love with Christ and His cross. He desires to help others know the gospel of God’s grace. You may contact Paul at [owolabipaul20@gmail.com](mailto:owolabipaul20@gmail.com).

that has been made above. I will be more than willing to share if called upon to do so.

It was Ellen White herself who said,

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible.

But we are not safe when we take a position that we will not accept anything else than that upon which we have settled as truth. We should take the Bible, and investigate it closely for ourselves. We should dig in the mine of God’s word for truth. We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed. The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God’s people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what (CW 39.1).

I have followed her own counsels, and this is where it has led me. The Bible is beautiful when it is studied not to prove some darling doctrines or to make sure it agrees with one prophet, but when it is studied in its simplicity with an open mind and with the Holy Spirit ready to guard. The discovery of the true gospel has changed all my life. There are still many things for me to learn, and daily, I will open my Bible and allow God constantly to teach me His words.

I have no regrets. Rather, the joy of the gospel of grace is better and greater than friends, fellowship, ministry, likes, praise, honor, position, and everything else the world offers.

I have no fears, either. I know what Ellen White has said in her book *Last Day Events*; twice I have read about the shaking and sifting of members who abandon her counsels and Adventism. Nevertheless, I rest in these words,

“But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:20–22).

If my leaving is part of the the shaking and sifting, may God send the Adventist Church greater and deeper shaking so that many more can come out of the massive error, legalism, and fear in this religion and enter into the glorious liberty and light of the gospel of grace.

Finally, I hope this document will go wherever people are told that I left. I believe virtue demands that people hear not just rumors about my departure but that they get to read my reasons for leaving the church that I once loved. †

## ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #22

# WORKING ON CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

### ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #22

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness.

### COMMENTARY ON THIS STATEMENT

Rather than “Christian Behavior” this belief statement should be called “Works”. This belief statement lists the “works” that are important to Seventh-day Adventism. What is left unsaid and unaddressed in this belief statement, however, is what happens if a person doesn’t have all of the works described in it. The belief statement ignores the most important part of any doctrine about works; the relationship between those works and a person’s salvation. This omission is another case of Adventism obscuring its true beliefs from the casual observer.

The phrasing about recreating “the character of our Lord” in us has specific connotations within Adventism. Recreating the character of Christ means living in the same obedient state that Christ lived; it means living without sin. Adventism teaches that Satan has charged God with unfairness, saying He gave a law that was impossible for fallen man to keep. Jesus, they say, came to show that it could be done.

There are several glaring departures from Scripture. Nothing in Scripture teaches that the Spirit will “recreate” the sinless character of our Lord in us. Even worse than adding a concept that isn’t found in Scripture is the underlying theme that the change in our

nature is based on us, rather than God. The statements in this belief make the change in our nature the result of those things we select “which will produce Christlike purity”. On the contrary, the Spirit, not our deeds, creates change in us. Christians are discriminating in our entertainment choices not in order to become Christlike but because we are already alive in Him, and things of the world interest us less and less. Adventism falsely teaches that Christlikeness flows from our choices; Scripture says our works flow from Christ’s work in us. Adventism’s cause and effect are backwards.

The belief statement also contends that we are to “care intelligently” for our bodies because they are the Spirit’s temple. This reference is used grossly out of context. In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul contrasts sexual immorality with all other activities that go on outside the body, including foods one eats. We are one with Christ because of the Spirit dwelling within us, so when we become “one” with a temple prostitute through sexual immorality, this sin is more grievous than those that occur outside the body. This is contrasted within these verses with food, all of which is lawful, but not all of which is good for us. What we take into our bodies, food and drink, does not pollute us (v. 12-13).

The implicit core of the Adventist Health Message is that we control our spiritual wellbeing through our diet; the better our diet, the more spiritual we can become. This replaces the work of the Holy Spirit with human works.

As children of God, already assured of His salvation, we perform good works (Eph. 2:8-10) because the Holy Spirit is working within us to create these good works (Gal. 5:22-26). The good works are produced to bring glory to God (Mt. 5:16; Is. 43:7), not to create righteousness in us. When it comes to the righteousness necessary for salvation, “all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Is. 64:6).

The nature and purpose of works is the most important element of any doctrine on christian behavior. And that is where Adventism falls woefully short. †

**Rick Barker** is a native of Southwestern Ohio and facilitates a weekly Bible study for former and transitioning Adventists in the Dayton, Ohio, area. Rick graduated from Andrews University in 1987 and received a Masters degree from the University of Dayton. Rick and his wife Sheryl formally left the Adventist church in 2004. Prior to this they had been active in the Miamisburg and Wilmington, Ohio, Adventist churches.



# DISCOVERING TRUTH

These three articles are adapted from teachings that Life Assurance Ministries board members Richard Tinker, Martin Cary and Carel Stevenson gave at Redeemer Fellowship on August 6, 2017, as part of the worship service. The video of the service is online here: [TinyURL.com/discoveringtruth](http://TinyURL.com/discoveringtruth).

# GOOD NEWS FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS

RICHARD TINKER

**D**id you know that we are all “formers?” We all once walked in slavery to sin and death, but when we trusted Christ, that slavery became our former life. I’m going to share with you how I became a “former”—a former Adventist, to be specific. I’m going to share how the book of Galatians revealed that I was serving my flesh instead of serving the Lord.

When I was an Adventist, I thought I knew the gospel. It included Jesus dying for my sins, but it also included a strong emphasis on keeping the Sabbath, on not eating meat, and on perfecting my character to be ready for the very-soon second coming of Jesus. I lived in constant fear and dread that I wouldn’t be good enough to go to heaven when He came. I deeply believed that the government would work with the religious who worshiped on Sunday to try to get me to go to church on the first day of the week, and if I didn’t, the government’s Sunday Law would give them permission to kill me.

I didn’t invent my own fear; here’s what the Adventist prophet Ellen White said:

The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty...When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not (*The Great Controversy*, p. 605).



## I was a follower of the Galatian heresy

Imagine my surprise, then, when I discovered that the confused gospel I had believed for over 40 years was similar to the Galatian heresy—the mixing of old-covenant laws with the Christian gospel. After all that fear had been drilled into my worldview, I was shocked and disoriented to realize I had been wrong. Galatians makes it clear that the law and the gospel do not mix.

The Galatians were gentile believers who were Paul’s spiritual children whom he had taught, and he shows his love for them by his intense rebuke of them and their false teachers. In fact, we see this rebuke right at the beginning of this epistle:

**I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—preached to you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6, 8).**

Accursed! Paul said that if anyone, even an angel from heaven preached a different gospel, he was to be accursed!

When I make strong statements about my former religion, I am sometimes challenged for being unfair and judgmental. But Paul doesn’t hold back when facing a perversion of the truth—he curses both the false gospel and those who teach it!

Paul even goes on to confront the apostles who were being influenced by the Judaizers who were insisting that the newly-believ-

ing gentiles keep the law. In Galatians 2 we find Paul chastising Peter for dishonoring the gospel by refusing to eat with the gentile converts after the Judaizers had come to town.

Peter knew better; he was the apostle who had received the vision of the sheet full of unclean animals and was told by God to eat them before being sent to a gentile’s house (Acts 10:1–23)! Peter knew full well that at the cross, God had removed the barrier of the law that had separated Jews and gentiles!

Like Peter, I, too, was confronted by Paul. I believed that keeping the Ten Commandments—especially the fourth which commanded Sabbath observance—was the final test of my loyalty that qualified me for salvation! But Paul challenged me:

**...yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified (Gal. 2:16).**

My Sabbath-keeping wouldn’t justify me! My being a vegetarian was nothing! My justification is only through faith in Jesus!

Have you ever felt like a fool? If so, you’ll know how I felt as Paul’s words hit home and I discovered that I had been following a false religion masquerading as Christian for over 40 years!

The Galatians also must have felt like fools after reading their letter from Paul. He stripped away their rationalizing and revealed the gospel deception they were believing. Listen to his condemnation of their heresy:

**O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:1–3).**

When I read that for the first time, I was dumbfounded. Here Paul equates the works of the law with our flesh. Even more, he equates clinging to the law with being deceived by witchcraft!

Suddenly I realized that my keeping the Sabbath was a work of my flesh and not of the Spirit.

Next Paul reminds the Galatians that the Bible gives us an example of a life of faith without law-keeping—the patriarch Abraham!

**Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:5–7).**

I had been taught as a boy that I was a son of Abraham because the Adventist church had replaced Israel. We Adventists were the true children of Abraham. But now, Paul had shattered that belief. I now saw that the true sons live by faith—and that fact changed everything for me.

## I never knew if I would make it to heaven

I had felt the burden of law-keeping, of never knowing if I was going to make it to heaven, of wondering whether I had repented of every sin. Now, however, I understood what Paul meant when he explained in verses 13 and 14 that Christ redeemed us from the law's curse, and that even we gentiles would receive God's blessings to Abraham when we are in Christ:

**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:13, 14).**

What great news! But then I wondered—why did God even bother to give the law from Mt. Sinai?

Paul, of course, had the answer for that question as well. In Galatians 3:17–23 Paul states that the old covenant started 430 years after Abraham and lasted until Christ. It was added because of sin, and its purpose was to keep Israel in custody until faith was revealed. Furthermore, the law was a guardian that looked after the immature Israelites, and it was intended to lead them to Christ.

The passage rings with this ending:

**But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith (Gal. 3:25, 26).**

As an Adventist, though, I explained away Paul's words. I would say that Paul was only removing some of the laws, the ones having to do with sacrifices that foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. My explanation, though, doesn't hold up when I read this passage in the context of the next chapter. Let's find out which laws Paul specifically says the Galatians were choosing to follow instead of living by faith:

**But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain (Gal. 4:9–11).**

The Galatians were observing the law by keeping days, months, seasons, and years. What Biblical laws were these?

*Days* correspond to the weekly Seventh-day Sabbath found in the ten commandments. *Months* are the new-moon Sabbaths that occurred at the first of every lunar month. The *seasons* are the seasonal festivals, four in the spring, and three in the fall, and *years* are the Sabbath years that occur every seven years including Jubilee which was celebrated every fiftieth year.

Suddenly I saw the truth; I was like the Galatians—I was keeping a day, a shadow—and I was in slavery.

In fact, as the letter of Galatians nears the end, Paul makes another argument to make it clear that the law covenant is no longer

a part of the Christian's life. He tells the story of Abraham's two sons as an allegory. He surprisingly compares the slave Hagar to the covenant God gave on Sinai, and he says those who cling to the law are the slave children of Hagar. They are sons of the flesh, and Hagar “corresponds to the present Jerusalem”.

Then he compares Sarah to the promise He gave to Abraham. Her children are not children of flesh nor slaves bound to the law; they are free, and Sarah is compared to “the Jerusalem above; she is our mother”.

Here's how Paul ends the comparison between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise:

**Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman (Gal. 4:28–31).**

We all must decide which mother we claim, Hagar or Sarah. Are you a son that lives in slavery and persecutes those who are free, or have you been born of the Spirit and given a new life of freedom?

I hope you have done what I've done—I hope that you have placed your full faith and trust in the Lord Jesus and have cast out the slave woman and her son. I hope that you have become a child of the free woman!

## One more question

There is one more question that I had to answer: if we are children of the free woman, how do we live without the old covenant law? Do we now get to kill, cheat, steal, and commit adultery?

In fact, we had a letter come to our ministry in which the writer claimed that the reason we left Adventism was so that we could eat ham and commit adultery! Nothing could be further from the truth.

Here's how Paul answers that charge:

**For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Gal. 5:13–14, 18).**

If we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus and have been sealed by His Spirit, then we will, by God's grace, love our neighbors as ourselves. Love—the selfless, truthful kind of love which is possible only in Christ—fulfills all the requirements of the law.

This is the reality of living in the new covenant. We are no longer under the law. We no longer have to observe holy days and food laws that foreshadowed the Messiah and separated Jews from gentiles. Instead, we walk by the Spirit, and when we do we will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Our Lord Jesus has fulfilled the law, and when we believe in Him, His righteousness is credited to our account. We are free indeed. †

**Richard Tinker** is the president of Life Assurance Ministries and an elder at Redeemer Fellowship, an evangelical church in Loma Linda, California. Richard and his wife Colleen have co-led Former Adventist Fellowship since 1999 and rejoice in the freedom they have found in living by the Spirit.

# NO CONDEMNATION!

CAREL STEVENSON

I want to share the amazing doctrine of the security of the believer that I discovered after leaving the Seventh-day Adventist community. The underlying despair I knew as an Adventist dissolved when I learned the truth about salvation in Jesus, and I want others who live in fear and shame to know the freedom that comes with knowing biblical truth.

**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).**

Each false religion and world view has its own distortion of truth, but in false religions posing as Christian, there is always an attack, even if it may not be immediately apparent, on the key issues of the nature of God, the nature of man, the law, and salvation. Adventism is no exception.

While Adventists can have differing views about various beliefs, one of the fundamental flaws in Adventist doctrine that affects all Adventists is that one can never be assured of one's salvation.

To help those of you who may not be familiar with Adventist teachings, I want to give a very brief introduction to one of the fundamental Adventist doctrines that is at the heart of many of Adventism's unbiblical teachings. The doctrine is known as the investigative judgment. To be fair, this unique doctrine is a complex extra-biblical construct, and most Adventists would not be able to teach it accurately. I will not explain it exhaustively, but understanding its concepts explains Adventists' lack of security. This doctrine also underlies many of the beliefs Adventists have been taught, whether they know it or not.

The Seventh-day Adventist organization began with a failed date-setting for the return of Christ. Subsequent to that date's passing, Ellen White claimed to have had a vision that verified a theory posited by another follower of William Miller, the date-setter. This theory provided a way out of the embarrassing mistake of having predicted Jesus' coming in the first place.

The theory became known as the doctrine of the investigative judgment, and its essence is that in 1844, Christ began a new work, not on earth as expected, but in heaven, where He began examining all the sins of all those who profess Him. Yes, you read that correctly; it is those who believe that come into this judgement. Moreover, the final verdict on believers will not be known until the Day of Judgement.

There is a lot more to this doctrine, but on the bottom line, the investigative judgment (IJ) is why Adventists must deny that man has a spirit that survives the death of the body. They believe in soul sleep because, according to the IJ, no one can know whether or not they are saved until Jesus comes. Until then, Jesus is involved in examining the records of all believers to see if their sins are confessed and overcome. No one can be with Jesus before the IJ is finished because their salvation can't be determined until their judgment is



over. Thus, there is no security for any Adventist even if he professes Jesus.

Ellen White actually stated that it is a sin of pride ever to say we are saved:

Peter's fall was not instantaneous, but gradual. Self-confidence led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master. Never can we

safely put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation. Those who accept the Savior, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved. This is misleading. Every one should be taught to cherish hope and faith; but even when we give ourselves to Christ and know that He accepts us, we are not beyond the reach of temptation. God's Word declares, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" (Dan. 12:10). Only he who endures the trial will receive the crown of life (Jas. 1:12).

Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength. They

are unprepared for Satan's devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. We are admonished, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 154, 155).

It is remarkable that in this quote she actually desires to prevent our experiencing one of the works of the Spirit:

**"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16).**

Nicole and I had been married for a few years and had progressively become more involved at the Adventist church where we were members. We were involved with the high school ministry and had even been made elders. One Saturday after church we ended up just sitting and talking for a while, and the conversation made it around to heaven and who is going. Somewhat startled by my comments, Nicole asked, "but Carel, you believe you are going to heaven though, right?" To which I responded with absolute confidence, "No, definitely not." And then I commenced letting her know what I knew of the requirements to make it to heaven, and how I clearly was not going to be saved—and furthermore, I was not sure I knew anyone who would be.

For me this understanding started as a child. In our home we would even talk condescendingly about those "Sunday-keepers" who claimed to be born again. We would never use that term in spite of the fact that the Lord Jesus used it when talking to Nicodemus in the garden:

**Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3).**

Our Lord used an analogy here that everyone can understand. By the time a child is five years old, he knows that the birth of a baby cannot be undone. We are also taught by Paul that when we believe, we are adopted as sons and heirs:

**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back**

into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom. 8:14–17).

With this adoption reference, Paul uses another clear analogy to describe our legal transfer from one family to another when we believe. From Roman times until now the law regarding adoption has been clear: an adopted child is given a permanent position and cannot be disowned.

We were not only taught that we cannot know we are saved, but we also learned as Adventists that the Sabbath is the seal of God. Those who have been Sabbath-keepers but then leave the Sabbath, we learned, are apostates and will be lost.

## Sabbath the seal

“The enemies of God’s law, from the ministers down to the least among them, have a new conception of truth and duty. Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. Too late they see the true nature of their spurious sabbath and the sandy foundation upon which they have been building. They find that they have been fighting against God. Religious teachers have led souls to perdition while professing to guide them to the gates of Paradise. Not until the day of final accounts will it be known how great is the responsibility of men in holy office and how terrible are the results of their unfaithfulness. Only in eternity can we rightly estimate the loss of a single soul. Fearful will be the doom of him to whom God shall say: Depart, thou wicked servant (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p.640).

What does this understanding do to the doctrine of security? If the Sabbath is the seal, what happens when we break the Sabbath?

Sabbath-keeping is one of the common sources of anxiety and disagreement among Adventists. While most Adventists would acknowledge the need to keep the Sabbath, few can agree on how that “keeping” is done. When I was a child there were rules such as no buying or selling on the Sabbath, no household chores, no bike riding, and so forth. However, when we would spend time with other Adventist families, the rules would be different in those other homes. I realized as a boy that if one is going to have a legal requirement, it must be clearly and consistently defined. Scripture, however, never gives us parameters for new covenant Sabbath-keeping.

This doctrine of Sabbath-keeping alone would undermine the new covenant by making our works the guarantee of our salvation. In direct contradiction to this belief, however, Paul clearly states that it is God the Spirit that seals us and is the guarantee of our inheritance with Christ:

**In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).**

I am very grateful that the word of God makes these issues clear.

Ellen White also teaches that unconfessed sins, even those we have forgotten, will keep us from salvation. Furthermore, her teaching on sanctification is that we, with Jesus as our example,

would progressively become like Christ until, in the day of judgment, such a person would stand before the Father without Christ as an intercessor.

“To be redeemed means to cease from sin,” she wrote in the *Review and Herald* (Sept. 25, 1900).

For many of us as Adventists, statements such as this served to remove any sense of security for children and adults alike.

When Nikki’s grandfather was at the end of his life, we had the opportunity to visit him. By most standards he had been a good man, a dedicated worker, husband, father, and an elder in the church, but we could see that he had no peace and was tormented by a complete lack of security. While sitting with him as he lay on his death bed, we tried to share with him what we had learned about the truth of the gospel.

Nikki quoted from 1 John 5:11–13 where the apostle states that one could know that one is saved, and in response he pointed his finger at her and said, “I have been reading the Bible and Ellen White for my whole life, and it’s just not that simple.”

In contrast we are taught that at the moment of belief we are permanently transferred out of judgment:

**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God (Jn. 3:18).**

**Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (Jn. 5:24).**

**What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,**

**For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31–39).**

I praise God that I now know that I am saved. My confidence is not based on my own feelings or on a wish; rather, it is based on the fact that I have repented of my sin and have believed that Jesus paid for my sin and opened a new and living way to the Father. I know I am saved because the Holy Spirit testifies to me that I am God’s son, and the promises in His word cannot fail. As believers, we know we are secure. †

**Carel Stevenson** is a board member of Life Assurance Ministries, and he and his wife Nicole were part of the team that launched Redeemer Fellowship in Loma Linda. They and their son and daughter exited Adventism in 2010 and are rejoicing in the security of their salvation.

# UNDER HIS WINGS

MARTIN CAREY

**“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust’” (Ps. 91:1-2).**

**W**hen I was a kid, I had trouble understanding Psalm 91; I found it hard to believe. All those promises of protection seemed exaggerated. I wondered, if those promises of God’s sheltering us are true, why was Mom always quoting that psalm out loud? She didn’t seem to feel safe, either.

Our little house in Takoma Park, Maryland was not a happy place. There were good reasons to feel fear in our house, with frequent, ugly conflict between my parents and between us kids. Both parents were at fault, each feeling disrespected and unloved, and they eventually divorced. With everyone yelling and complaining, our home was a chaotic mess. Besides the usual couple issues, my parents’ conflicts often focused on religion. Dad was becoming an atheist, while Mom was a loyal Seventh-day Adventist. Even when our house seemed peaceful, sadness and foreboding hung in the air.

Beneath the unrest in our home, however, there was an underlying spiritual influence. We sincerely believed in the great controversy, a core doctrine of our Adventist faith. Some theologians have called it the Adventist “theory of everything” on which their whole system of thought rests.

The great controversy portrays a vast cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan that has raged since before the world’s creation. It began when the angel Lucifer rebelled against God and accused Him of being unjust, enforcing His arbitrary laws. Lucifer as Satan was able to put God on trial before the entire universe, questioning God’s basic goodness. God needed to save His reputation before intelligent people inhabiting billions of unfallen worlds who might also doubt Him. God was in a weakened position, forced to allow Satan to run amok throughout the entire universe, to tempt and destroy. Now unleashed, Satan became disruptive, ruthless, and omnipresent. According to the Adventist prophet Ellen White, God was forced to allow all Satan’s evil to prove how bad he is. The great controversy invaded every part of our lives, and for us, our eternal safety was always in doubt. Our universe was a dangerous place.

## God was only a Frustrated Fixer

We believed the Bible as we understood it, but in our world view, God was only a Frustrated Fixer with Jesus as His meek little assistant. We wanted to trust Jesus, but Satan’s power seemed much more real than Jesus’ power, especially at our house.



It seemed that God was not really in control, so He was taking risks with our lives in hope of someday winning the game. We understood that He was trying to protect our free will—our precious freedom to reject Him, but that was cold comfort to our fears. Actually for us, God was like a great gambler, playing the cards of our fate, dealt to Him by Satan, and limited in His ability to protect our futures. “Loving Jesus, meek and mild, look on me, a little child,” we would pray before bedtime, but we believed Jesus could have failed. His failure would have destroyed our lives and made evil last forever. So Jesus being human like us showed how fragile He was, and wasn’t all that comforting.

What God really needed, we were told, were end-time demonstration people—people who could perfectly keep His commandments—to vindicate God’s good name. His warning to us seemed to be, “Obey Me, or else Satan wins!” Worse, God was a political God, making shaky promises and campaigning for votes. He was an “almost God,” almost in charge, almost believable. We believed that vindicating God’s name rested on our shoulders—we could become perfect commandment-keepers, with God’s help, of course. But what we demonstrated at home was closer to reality.

Mom truly trusted in Jesus, even though she believed those Adventist doctrines. When we were angry and negative, she would break out into song. We’d get irritated and say, “Mom! Stop singing! We wanna stay mad!” Her favorite hymn was, “Under His wings, I am safely abiding, though the night deepens and tempests are wild...” She was trying to be momma hen for her squabbling little chickens, protecting us. Tempests were wild, alright, and how could our little souls be safe? We had night terrors and were plagued with the horrors of death. Down deep, we wondered, “How can God promise anything?”

## Growing agnosticism

From an early age, I always loved the stars, but I also feared them. I knew God made them, but where was He out there? We believed that the universe was contested territory, with its ownership still in question. The stars were magnificently powerful and distant, yet cold and hostile.

These doubts and fears deepened as I got older, turning childish faith into cynicism. As an Adventist, I enjoyed our “we have the truth” privilege—but what was true? We were supposed to be end-time perfect examples, through character development and sheer force of will. I believed, “If it is to be, it is up to me,” and this was surely a fool’s errand! I repeated this sad cycle:

1. Revival – Go to an evangelistic meeting and get all excited.
2. Resolution – Make lots of promises to be good.
3. Obedience – Try hard to keep the 10 commandments, and Mrs. White’s 10,001 rules for the Remnant.
4. Failure – Stumble, fall, and get discouraged. Time for another revival!

I couldn’t show that failure at church, so I learned to wear a mask, concealing my doubts and discouragement behind a pious

face. I decided I would abandon my certainties from childhood and discover truth for myself. Living with unrelenting uncertainty, it seemed no one was really in charge of the universe, so I had to take charge of me. I became very prideful and stupid. My do-it-yourself-truth program was pure vanity, and I got depressed with pointless intellectual games.

Meanwhile, the real God had not left me, and all the while, He was orchestrating my misery. He obviously didn't respect my freedom to rebel against Him, but instead, had backed me into a corner. I suddenly became filled with dissatisfaction and desperation.

## Looking for the truth

There had to be truth somewhere. I started re-studying Adventist beliefs, but got thoroughly confused, again. If only I could hear the real Jesus speak to me directly, I could believe. So I began slowly reading His words, and noticed He often started sentences

## Then I saw the simple elegance of the gospel for the first time. What Jesus offered was amazing, really good news, unlike the great controversy. The good news wasn't about a fight between Christ and Satan.

with, "Truly, truly I say to you." Strange, but I realized this was no politician; He really meant what He said. He called out the hypocrites and His bold words got Him killed. This was real integrity, and kingly authority. No one ever had spoken like this man. I wondered, if he isn't God, then who is he?

At His trial Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "For this purpose I was born, and for this purpose I have come into this world—to bear witness to the truth." This was direct, with no cowardly side-stepping or deception. Jesus was alone against the mob, His reputation destroyed, yet He was faithful to the death. His bold honesty was a mark of royalty.

He told Pilate, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Those words hit home. Would I be like Pilate and turn away, or was I able to honestly listen?

Then I saw the simple elegance of the gospel for the first time. What Jesus offered was amazing, really good news, unlike the great controversy. The good news wasn't about a fight between Christ and Satan. It was all about what Jesus has already done in bearing sin for us and rising for our new life. I loved that gospel, but I still had trouble believing it applied to me.

One night I was studying some tedious theological article on judgment, and suddenly, I realized Jesus' words were speaking to me directly:

**"Truly truly I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24).**

That got my attention. "...Has passed from death to life." Wow. I can know my eternal future right now because He was judged in-

stead of me. But was I a genuine "whoever"? I can actually be certain of my eternal future, right now, because He was judged instead of me. I would never, ever live under His condemnation. I knew at that moment He was really speaking to me.

But He offered more: He will remember our sins no more, He will live in us forever, and we will all know Him (Jer. 31:34). He said it simply: I will not come into judgment, but will have already passed from death to life.

Light suddenly shone into my dungeon. For the first time, I saw God's majesty. Like the old hymn said, "Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all." Finally, I was caught, I had no place to hide—humbled and convicted, I repented and trusted in Jesus.

When you know the universe has a real King, everything looks different. Nature isn't cold and hostile anymore. You see His splendor not only in the stars, but also in strange places, even rocky cliffs and merging galaxies. How so? It's in Jeremiah 31. To show He really meant His promises to His people, God attached a universe-sized promise to His everlasting covenant. He links His faithfulness to the order of the sun and moon, the roaring sea, and to the whole order of nature (Jer. 31:35-36).

"If this fixed order departs, then shall the offspring of Israel cease..." The Old Covenant from Moses was made to fade, but the New Covenant is everlasting. If you doubt it, just look at His heavens. There's the proof!

In the King's realm, the fixed order makes life possible. We live on a privileged planet orbiting a dependable star, in a safe pocket in our galaxy. This is design, the ancient, faithful, glorious purpose of our Creator. The universal, unchanging laws of the cosmos testify that every galaxy is the undisputed territory of One Owner. Furthermore, He never gambles with His creation, and He will never gamble with your life. The Fixed Order of nature shows He is a good king.

## The King is on His throne

The frightening, awesome glory of nature shouldn't disturb us, for the King has never stopped ruling. The Bible and Science both testify to that fact. His name is faithful and true (Rev. 10:11).

But you might ask, "What about Satan's power to threaten our future?" When we fear Satan, we look to God's power and promises instead. Satan is a roaring Lion, but only God holds the future in His hands:

**"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Is. 46:9-10).**

So now at last, I know Mom's annoying, embarrassing old song told the truth. No matter where we are, in the worst moments of our lives, "Still I can trust Him, I know He will keep me; He has redeemed me and I am His child." †

Martin Carey is a board member of Life Assurance Ministries. He and his wife Sharon were part of the core team that cast the vision for Redeemer Fellowship. The Careys left Adventism for the Lord Jesus in 2006 and have found security under the everlasting wings of our sovereign God.



WINTER CONFERENCE 2018 • FEBRUARY 16–18, 2018

# THE DOCTRINE OF GOD



FELLOWSHIP IN THE PASS CHURCH • BEAUMONT, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
TRAVEL AND LODGING INFORMATION: [www.FormerAdventist.com](http://www.FormerAdventist.com)

## CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

### COST

- \$85/person for Friday morning through Sunday afternoon (Scholarships are available).
- Fee includes all sessions, session book, handouts, free stuff, snacks throughout, lunch and dinner on Friday, lunch and dinner on Saturday, and lunch on Sunday.
- You must make your own lodging and transportation arrangements. A limited number of local church member's homes are available. Call for more information: (909) 794-9804.

### SIGN UP NOW

MAIL: Mail check payable to Life Assurance Ministries, PO Box 7776, Redlands, CA 92375

ONLINE: [FormerAdventist.com](http://FormerAdventist.com) (click on "Doctrine of God" banner ad)

PHONE: (909) 794-9804 (Life Assurance Ministries) for more information.



[FORMERADVENTIST.COM](http://FORMERADVENTIST.COM)

## SCHEDULE

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2018

- 9:00 Welcome/Worship
- 9:15 Session 1
- 10:30 Session 2
- 11:45 Breakout Sessions
- 1:45 Session 3
- 3:30 Session 4
- 6:30 Public Session (Community Invited)

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2018

- 9:30 Session 5
- 11:00 Breakout Sessions
- 1:00 Session 6
- 2:30 Breakout Sessions
- 4:00 Q and A Session
- 6:30 Session 7

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2018

- 10:30 Church: Redeemer Fellowship (Loma Linda)
- 12:30 Fellowship Lunch (Redlands)



DALE RATZLAFF  
FOUNDER, LIFE ASSURANCE  
CAMP VERDE, ARIZONA



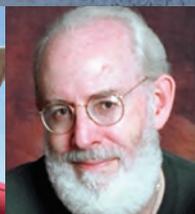
GARY INRIG  
LEAD PASTOR, REDEEMER FELLOWSHIP  
LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA



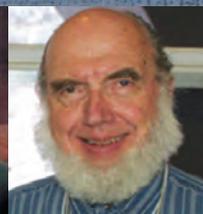
RICHARD AND COLLEEN TINKER  
LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES  
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



MARTIN CAREY  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST  
GRAND TERRACE, CALIFORNIA



PAUL CARDEN  
DIRECTOR, C/FAR  
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA



JIM VALENTINE  
DIRECTOR, C.A.R.I.S.  
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



JONATHAN WINN  
CONFERENCE WORSHIP LEADER  
YUCAIPA, CALIFORNIA

A photograph of a person walking away on a path through a forest of large, ancient trees. The path is covered in green grass and fallen leaves. The trees are tall and have thick, gnarled trunks. The lighting is soft, suggesting a misty or overcast day. The person is wearing a blue coat and a red hat.

# WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAVE A CULT

ANN ROBERTS

Ann Roberts grew up in a small Millerite offshoot called the International Bible Students. Her cult splintered from the original Russelites and shares the heresies of non-eternal hell and a non-eternal human soul with both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventists. The remarkable thing about Ann's story, however, is her description of the process involved in exiting a cult that has deeply brainwashed its members into a heretical worldview. Those of us who have left Adventism for biblical Christianity resonate with her fears of being further deceived and of needing detailed doctrinal teaching and deep Bible study in order to untangle the cultic understandings that often puzzle or frustrate "normal" Christians. We share Ann's story for two reasons. First, it confirms that we who have fought our way out of Adventism into biblical Christianity are not alone nor are we crazy. Second, this story helps those who have never been locked in a cult to understand what it means when we former cultists actually leave. Ann illuminates our losses, needs, and thought processes clearly as she tells her unique story.

**H**eresy is nothing new. Not long after Jesus' resurrection, the Christian church began to splinter over doctrine and cultural issues, but in the case of heresy, it is not true that only the strongest survive. History can barely keep up with the fragments of apostates and dissenters who met quietly, behind closed doors, surviving—thriving—savoring their persecution as evidence of the true faith; salt that had not lost its flavor. Today, we call many of these groups cults. But the people within such groups call themselves believers.

I grew up a member of the International Bible Students—a distant off-shoot of the Millerite movement. We were the true fellowship of Christ, called out from the denominations, obeying the command in Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." The seventh angel had sounded his trumpet. Ours was the church of Laodicea,<sup>1</sup> the lukewarm church fighting against the enemy of indifference. Pastor Charles Taze

Russell, our leader, had been the messenger of this time period. Though he died near the turn of the 20th century, he left us with a myriad of his writings—the really good stuff, a final revelation for God's church. And although Russell never claimed to be a prophet, we regarded his teachings as the lone key with which to unlock the mysteries of biblical prophecy. Christ had, indeed, returned in 1874, though invisibly—unnoticed by the world and the realm of nominal Christendom. Nevertheless, only the real church would understand the significance behind the Jews returning to their land. The End Times were upon us, we only had to keep vigilant, and spread the good news: that there was no hell, that Christ died for all, the resurrection was for all men, and that God's most faithful would be raised first to organize the Kingdom efforts, to reign from heaven as a literal 144,000 throughout the millennium,<sup>2</sup> during which Satan would be bound and everything would be awesome. Also, Jesus was the archangel Michael. We were not a cult.

Alright. Even if we were a cult, at least we were a nice one.

For most of my life I didn't know the world thought of my church as a cult. I had no idea they ever thought of us at all. Most Christians, when hearing highlights from our doctrines, assumed we were Jehovah's Witnesses, but in fact, most of the first Jehovah's Witnesses, at one point, had been Bible Students. Ours was the group that broke from Judge Rutherford after the death of Russell in 1916, and while the Witnesses built a giant off the back of Russell's writings, the Bible Students took his teachings and settled themselves in ecclesias all over the world, where they praised and studied, argued and splintered, and attempted lackluster evangelism efforts because, after all, when there is no Hell,<sup>3</sup> there also isn't much point to the legwork.

### Warned with a chuckle

It was only when I developed curiosity regarding the history of our group that my uncle, a prominent elder<sup>4</sup> within the church, warned me with a chuckle, "You're going to see a lot of interesting things about Pastor Russell on the Internet. Be aware, they aren't true." And this advice wasn't issued in a sinister tone, but with full, faithful assurance. My uncle didn't attempt to shield my eyes from contradictory views, or worry that the Devil would ensnare me with false teachings—that heinous seeds of doubt might be planted. Of course, he didn't fear the loss of control over my soul. We were not a cult.

I won't go into detail about what I found on the Internet that day, or that night, or the subsequent days where I sat around, biting my nails, reading lurid accusations against the man who founded our faith, squirming in my chair as I learned why the mainline churches loathed our doctrine—not because it was a threat to their authority, but more because of its vast, glittering array of heresies. It was as if Pastor Russell had folded every major heresy throughout church history into an origami swan of glad tidings. He had adopted Arianism, modified Arminianism, Restorationism, Pyramid theology, soul sleep, Adventism, Annihilationism, some very interesting views on substitutionary atonement, and a horde of lesser beliefs that set us so far apart from other Christian groups. It was no wonder we felt special.

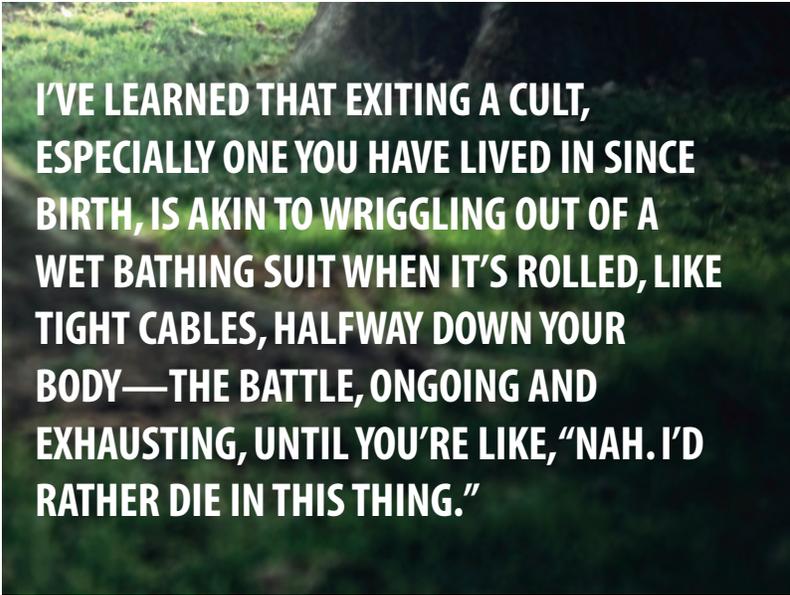
I've learned that exiting a cult, especially one you have lived in since birth, is akin to wriggling out of a wet bathing suit when it's rolled, like tight cables, halfway down your body—the battle, ongoing and exhausting, until you're like, "Nah. I'd rather die in this thing." In any organization, there are individuals who quietly question their faith, but the process of change appears so taxing and cruel, and the emotional sacrifices—too many. They will die where they are. Others remain because the religion is seemingly working for them. Their experience has been positive, and that positive feeling is mistaken for truth. And some will stay because the alternatives seem worse, because many individuals in cults have undergone a lifelong indoctrination against all outside religions. This is why most Bible Students leave and go into the world,<sup>5</sup> not into nearby Christian congregations. Our movement began as an exodus from the mainstream Protestant churches—a depiction of Babylon—whose doctrine Russell spent a lifetime critiquing, whose deficiencies he highlighted continually, ex-

pressly—thoroughly. No, a return to Orthodox Christianity would be going backward, not forward.

Here was my problem: not long before my investigation on the Internet, I had actually been inside a real Christian church—just once—but I remember the experience vividly. As a Bible Student, I'd been trained to identify the outside denominations as "nominal"—Christian in name only. I was led to believe that the people in these churches might appear outwardly sweet, but they didn't know their Bible, there was little depth to their faith, and they worshipped gods who looked like shamrocks and threatened flaming hells ruled by devils with pitchforks. These institutions were hungry for money, and their leaders were always soliciting parishioner's wealth by passing around offering plates.<sup>6</sup> And it is possible, had my first visit to a Christian church been to a different church than the one I ultimately attended, that I would have found some of these descriptions to be true. But as it happened, the church I visited was Grace Community—John MacArthur's church—also known to some as the "City of God."

### My first visit to a "real" church

If you don't know anything about Grace Community church, I'd like you to summon up the idea of a sweet, impressionable congregation—one that consults the table of contents to find Job in its Bibles—and then kill it with fire. This is not MacArthur's church. Grace Community is the very opposite of the term lukewarm, the



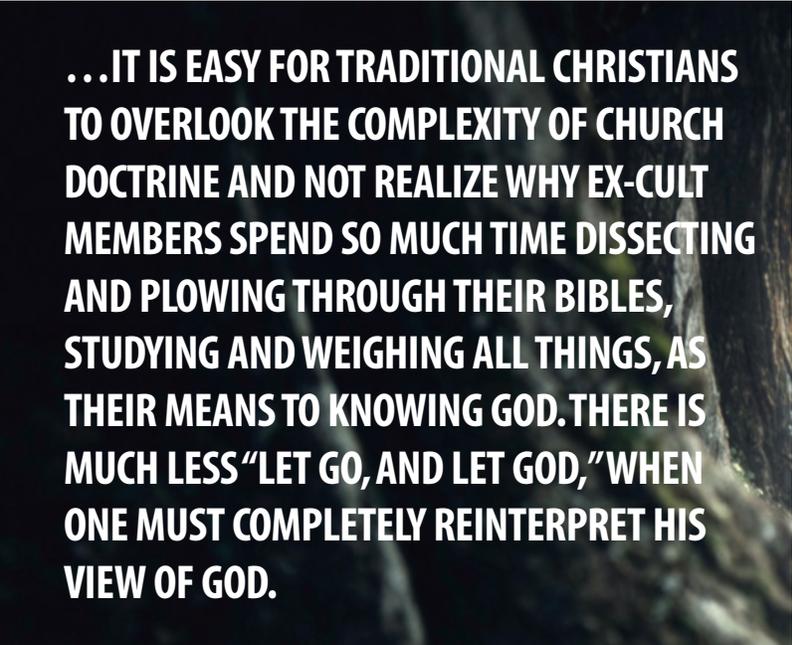
**I'VE LEARNED THAT EXITING A CULT, ESPECIALLY ONE YOU HAVE LIVED IN SINCE BIRTH, IS AKIN TO WRIGGLING OUT OF A WET BATHING SUIT WHEN IT'S ROLLED, LIKE TIGHT CABLES, HALFWAY DOWN YOUR BODY—THE BATTLE, ONGOING AND EXHAUSTING, UNTIL YOU'RE LIKE, "NAH. I'D RATHER DIE IN THIS THING."**

opposite of everything I'd been led to believe about the nominal Christians. They remain passionate, militant, relentless in their faith—and as it turns out, yours too! Because at the slightest inkling of your sad, unsaved soul, the people of Grace will swoop in on chariots of fire to evangelize you, and it will be done under dim lights, with all the coddling and patience of a Russian gulag.

Grace had a college evangelism team that met Wednesday nights to greet and convict the godless. They would set up their lit tables, stacked with books and Bibles, and then stand with their

hands folded, searching the pupils of passersby, hoping to see a gleam of interest. Just by chance, I managed to be around when their Bible Study leader took on a blithe-looking philosophy professor who chose to goad these Christians over the issue of scriptural infallibility. At this point in my life, I had only seen Bible Students evangelize, if you could call it that. They are a kindly, educated group who hand out pamphlets, issue a thumbs up, and gleefully wait for a Trinitarian to crash their party, such that a game of scriptural chess might arise.<sup>7</sup>

Not so with the Grace folks. The Bible Study leader took to the smug professor with a flaming sword. “YOU, SIR, ARE IN SIN, AND YOU MUST REPENT!” His voice bellowed throughout



**...IT IS EASY FOR TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANS TO OVERLOOK THE COMPLEXITY OF CHURCH DOCTRINE AND NOT REALIZE WHY EX-CULT MEMBERS SPEND SO MUCH TIME DISSECTING AND PLOWING THROUGH THEIR BIBLES, STUDYING AND WEIGHING ALL THINGS, AS THEIR MEANS TO KNOWING GOD. THERE IS MUCH LESS “LET GO, AND LET GOD,” WHEN ONE MUST COMPLETELY REINTERPRET HIS VIEW OF GOD.**

the grounds, as I inched away from the spectacle. This was a highly confrontational form of Christianity. These people were culture warriors, and looking back, how could they not be? They believed in God’s wrath—that it would be pure and righteous, and terrible. They believed that people needed to be saved from something.

I, however, was not prepared. I was just a student, searching for a college Bible study. I wanted someone with whom to share my prophetic knowledge of Ezekiel—someone to impress, during a time when my own ecclesia was diminishing and I was now the last person left in my age group. Most of our young people had left for remote schools. Many had lost their faith and interest in unclanking the inscrutabilities of Isaiah. I felt I had no choice but to seek fellowship outside my home church. So, upon discovering that Grace led a study on my campus, I was there, dressed to the nines, with two Bible translations and a concordance in hand.

Within twenty minutes I realized I didn’t know anything about this Christian religion or its culture. For the Bible Student, there is a familiar Sunday routine. Everyone takes their seats, we sing one sad hymn accompanied by a mournful piano, a prayer ensues that can last anywhere from twenty to ninety seconds, before which, the women pin small, lace doilies to their heads, and then the sermon begins. It will ultimately have to do with the ransom sacrifice,<sup>8</sup> or

the symbolism of the Tabernacle.<sup>9</sup> One more hymn, then a coffee break, a Bible study about the Beast and its horns, and next, lunch with the five other members of your ecclesia who aren’t on dialysis.

Again, not so with the Grace folks. We sang some songs. Songs I didn’t know. I looked at the floor a lot, and then we sang some more. They sang with fervor and gratitude, and with a desire for God that I had never seen, maybe because what my church desired was to know the precise hour of the apocalypse. I thought, at one point, when we’d divided into study groups, that I might help these poor hyper-sentimental Calvinists to understand the book of Revelation. I referenced some very colorful passages about plagues, trampled winepresses, and golden bowls, and explained that it made no sense for Christians to have large families so close to the binding of Satan. I was met with stares, a John MacArthur commentary, and an invitation to their main service on Sunday, which I eagerly accepted because these people clearly needed me.

I don’t exactly remember what I anticipated, the first morning I visited a nominal Christian church, but I do recall navigating through Grace’s campus and expecting to see more—jewels? Maybe a stained-glass window, or five thousand of them? Throngs of goblins lounging atop mountains of gold, pouring wine down their throats out of gem-laden chalices? Instead, I arrived at a large, unassuming collection of buildings within a setting that seemed almost academic. The sanctuary was huge, but for all the wealth this nominal church had accrued, its only decoration was one somber wooden cross, set up high on the back wall, behind the podium. There was a massive influx of people, and several congested parking lots, and me, clacking around on what I assumed was appropriate attire for the nominal church—four-inch heels and a designer pencil dress that cost enough to pay the sanctuary’s electric bill. Unfortunately, I was surrounded by simply-dressed, sober-minded believers who really enjoyed that morning’s sermon, which was devoted to modesty.

The singing was great that day. The sermon was great. I was not.

It was years before I returned to Grace, and when I did, I was in much better shape—in that I was pregnant and in shame, and I wasn’t as happy to be there, as I needed to be there, in full awareness of my sin. To endure the humiliation of bright happy Christian faces, so thankful to have a newcomer amongst them, and then to answer that soul-biting question, “So, when were you saved?” I’m not. I am not like you. I don’t even know who I am.

### **Difficult time controlling secret fears**

I wish I could say that, now, over a decade later, after I’ve witnessed truth, experienced saving faith, reveled in an abundance of sound preaching, passed John MacArthur several times on my way to the music room, and sung in his choir where, perched against the back wall I would judiciously watch to see which congregants opened their eyes during prayer (I am a terrible person), that I am at peace—that my soul rests firmly in the Spirit, and my life and my thoughts are like still waters. But this simply isn’t true, and from what I’ve seen, most people that come out of cults or exotic fringe groups have a difficult time controlling their secret fears—the constant, unsettling recollection that, at one point in your life, you had things wrong, but you felt such assurance. I very much re-

member the times when, as a young girl, I would pray to the Lord, so thankful that I belonged to this little flock of individuals who had been granted the truth—that we'd been set apart—while the world remained in darkness. And now that I am no longer a Bible Student, I struggle with assurance. Everything has to be examined, cross-examined, proven beyond a doubt because I was wrong once before. What if I'm wrong again?

Because a firm and full conversion to Christ is such a rare occurrence, particularly for those who have been damaged by cults and are still harboring fear and resentment, I feel the need to interject an observation about such persons: Theirs will be highly multifaceted and doctrinal conversions. Individuals coming in from the world, or a weak introductory faith, are often saved after realizing their sin and need for a Savior. But cult constituents are very different. They require far more apologetics and doctrinal counseling. They need to be reasoned with, often to the point of full religious deprogramming. I become nervous when hearing some Christians say, "Well, it's possible these people experience doctrinal conversions without true saving faith," because it could easily be argued some experience emotional conversions without the stabilizing roots of doctrine—and solid doctrine is the foundation of modern Christian faith. These are not the days of fiery tongues and miracles. Christians face a silent landscape with only the Word to guide them.

### Ex-cult members plow through their Bibles

It's likely that the more educated you were in your previous religion, the more deprogramming and knowledge you will need to obtain Truth. The more intellectual you are, the warier of contradiction and poor argument. I have met individuals who came into Christ from the world with an incredible zeal for God, but with a poor grasp of Christian ethics and culture. In which case, it took time for them to understand something as simple as how to dress on Sunday mornings. Likewise, it is easy for traditional Christians to overlook the complexity of church doctrine and not realize why ex-cult members spend so much time dissecting and plowing through their Bibles, studying and weighing all things, as their means to knowing God. There is much less "Let go, and let God," when one must completely reinterpret his view of God.

I am still the daughter of one of two leading Bible Student elders. My father continues to conduct Sunday meetings, writes for various Bible Student publications, and trots all over the continent, delivering sermons and irritating my mother with his unwillingness to purchase a cellphone. My uncle died almost ten years ago; the absence of his scholarship—a huge blow to the movement—has left a void too large to fill. On my bookshelf, there are still a few pieces of Bible Student literature, including a Bible translation that was pioneered by my father which, of course, cannot be used in the orthodox Christian churches due to its translation of John 1:1. But it's my dad's. I have a hard time letting go.

My husband is a Christian and very patient with my sentimentality, though he regards my religious upbringing with the same awe as one viewing an alien spacecraft hurtling toward a cornfield. And since the local Bible Student ecclesia actually meets no more than five blocks from our house, we occasionally take our children to see this group of people, who are still family.<sup>10</sup> My mother, an ex-

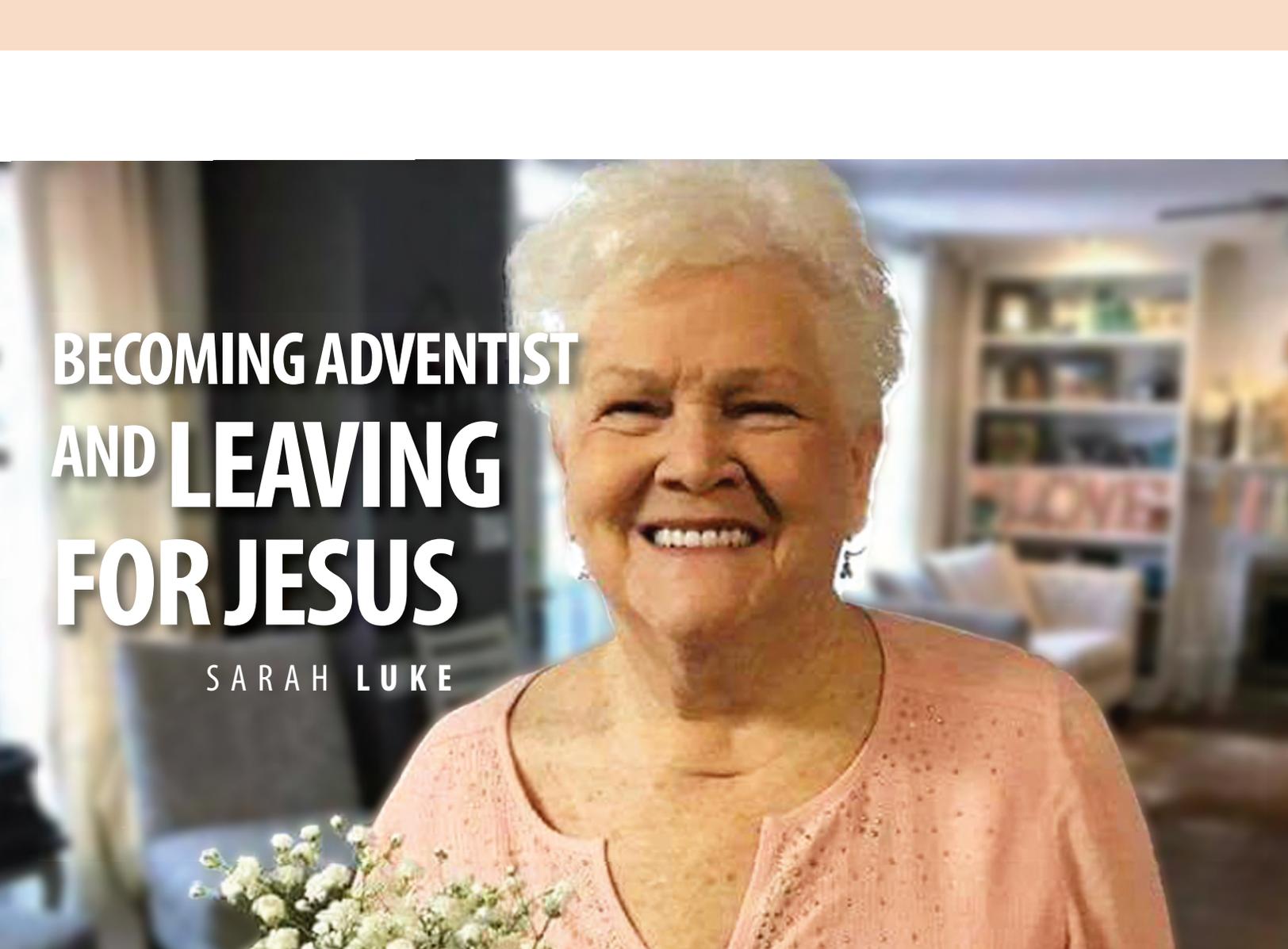
Jehovah's Witness,<sup>11</sup> will quite joyfully engage us in a debate regarding the deity of Christ—a debate which almost always ends with my being written out of the will. Most times, mine are the only children in the meeting hall, as the religion is quickly dying out. A church that believes Armageddon is just around the corner has little incentive to build strong godly families, or to promote zeal in the movement. But Bible Students take delight in their dwindling numbers as, for them, it is a sign that the church is nearing completion—that the Kingdom is near. It is a challenge to evangelize people who view an empty church as a sign of success, but as always, a true Bible Student will invite you to try. †

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Bible Students interpret the various churches mentioned in Revelation as symbolic of the true church as it progressed throughout the ages; starting with Ephesus, the first church that formed after Christ's death, and ending with the current church, Laodicea.
- <sup>2</sup> For Bible Students, the thousand years in Revelation represents a testing period for mankind. All individuals not of the church class will be resurrected on earth, free from Satan and the bondage of sin. This serves as a "second chance" for all those who have lived. At the end of the millennium, those who do not pass the test will be subject to the second death.
- <sup>3</sup> Bible Students do not believe in eternal torment, or the immortality of the soul.
- <sup>4</sup> With the exception of Pastor Charles Russell, Bible Students refer to their pastors using the biblical term "elder." These elders are elected by an ecclesiastical majority.
- <sup>5</sup> Most Bible Students have viewed the world as a safer alternative to Christendom. For this reason, many Bible Students will send their children to public schools and universities, rather than those affiliated with mainstream churches. This is largely because Russell interpreted the call out of Babylon as a command to leave institutional Christianity, though he strongly discouraged a college education in the Humanities.
- <sup>6</sup> This is particularly insufferable to Bible Students, who never solicit funds from their members. Ecclesias are funded by donations only. Most ecclesias rent out their facilities, and will meet in the homes of members if funds are not available. A mortgage is seen as debt—an unnecessary burden for Christians.
- <sup>7</sup> In general, Bible Students thrive on good scriptural debate. If you plan to descend on their doctrines, prepare your arguments well, or you will find them more educated in their heresy than you are in orthodoxy.
- <sup>8</sup> A Bible Student term used to illustrate Christ's death on the cross as a means to eliminate the ramifications of Original sin.
- <sup>9</sup> Bible Students are fascinated with certain biblical numbers and structures, which they believe to be symbolic.
- <sup>10</sup> Bible Students do not ostracize those who depart from standard doctrine, or those who express different points of view. They consider themselves free agents.
- <sup>11</sup> Close to half of Bible Student converts come in from the Jehovah's Witnesses, due to the group's similar origins and theology.



The author, **Ann Roberts**, is the little girl on the front left of the picture. Her parents, who are still Bible Students, are the couple behind her on the left.



# BECOMING ADVENTIST AND LEAVING FOR JESUS

SARAH LUKE

**Sarah Luke was told in May, 2017, that her cancer was inoperable, and she was given three to six months to live. She has committed herself to telling the good news of the gospel in the time that God grants her. We are honored that she has sent us the account of her journey into Adventism and then, finally, out of it through the grace of God. She desires that all who hear her story will be compelled, as she has been, by the gospel of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for the payment and forgiveness of our sins.**

I became an Adventist in 1972. I had had a very sad, abusive life and was actually at the end of my rope, so to speak. I had been invited to a friend's baptism at the Adventist church two or three years earlier, and one bleak Friday I passed that church on the way home from work. Feeling desperate and hopeless, I decided to go into the church and see if I felt anything. Instead of finding a spiritual experience, however, to my horror I set off the burglar alarm.

I called my friend and told her what I had done, and after contacting the pastor, she called me back and said the pastor would forgive me if I would visit the church the next morning. The next day when I met him, I asked the pastor what he had to

help an alcoholic. He replied, "Nothing; we don't have that problem in Adventist churches."

Nevertheless, that very night a series of evangelistic meetings was beginning at the church, and I did not miss a single evening of the whole series. I was excited to do something that might finally help me to stop drinking and find peace. I felt isolated, and I so desperately wanted to fit in somewhere, and those people at the Adventist church were giving me attention and accepting me.

I discovered, as the meetings progressed, that the Adventists had some rules and regulations. They would not let me be a baptized member, however, until I took off all my jewelry, stopped smoking and drinking coffee and quit drinking alcoholic beverages. I dutifully met all their requirements and was baptized.

Soon after I had become a member, their attention toward me stopped, and I became bored with my Adventist experience. Nevertheless, I kept attending, and to my surprise I learned that I was not the only one struggling to keep the rules. In fact, many of the long-time members were not keeping the rules.

About a year after joining the church, I got drunk one weekend. The next morning, weighed down with guilt and shame

and with the fear that I might be disfellowshipped, I called a deacon who had said he had been an alcoholic but was sober now. I hoped for some word of encouragement, but he became very stern and told me that if I had been killed in a wreck while alcohol was in my body, I would have gone to hell!

Discouraged, I also started smoking again, and for many years I tried to hide what I was doing. I didn't understand then that in all my trial-and-error failures to keep the rules, my focus was on me, not Jesus!!

### **Two of us trying to be good**

During those years I met a man at the Adventist church and remarried. Then there were two of us trying to be good! He was not yet a member, but another evangelistic series came to town, and my husband was persuaded to be baptized.

Marriage and church membership, however, did not resolve my addictions, and in 1988 I checked into a Christ-centered treatment center. To my surprise, I discovered I had never really known Jesus! One of the counselors explained salvation to me, and I accepted Christ as my Savior on 8-8-88, and I have never had a drink of alcoholic beverage since.

I went back to the Adventist church with a whole new attitude and really kept most of the rules. I never had any peace and joy, but I worked hard giving Bible studies to add to the numbers of the membership and gained brownie points by the dozens. My world fell apart, however, after my husband died in 1996. I was feeling desperate again, and for five years I stopped attending the Adventist church and visited a Spirit-filled church. I learned many wonderful things, but I knew I would ultimately have to return to Adventism. I believed they had the truth, but I was full of fear that when I returned to the Adventist bondage of law and rules, I would be lost.

Eventually I did return to the Adventist church, but the confusion and internal struggles ultimately prepared me to see that Adventism did not actually teach the truth. After I settled into my local congregation, I eventually became an elder and then a co-head elder. It was then that I began to see the internal corruption clearly.

Individual church members began to approach me with their concerns about the senior pastor. Over a period of about a year, 40 different people, mostly congregational leaders, left our local church. Each time someone would come to me or to my co-head elder with their complaints, we asked them to go to the pastor and speak to him directly. Each person said he or she already had gone to the pastor, but he had become defensive and angry. Finally my co-head elder and I went to the pastor together, but the results of our visit were exactly as others had reported. No understanding was reached, and the pastor became angry and defensive.

Ultimately, the local conference office contacted us, and they moved the pastor and put him on a three-month sabbatical. This situation left division, bitterness, and anger in the church, and the members aligned themselves either in support of the pastor or against him. My breaking point came when a 44-year friendship ended over my support of the pastor's removal. I had

## **Now I have an urgency to share my story of being set free from Adventism by the truth of Jesus.**

## **You see, I have received a terminal diagnosis, and as of this writing, I have only weeks to live.**

already moved 13 miles away from the church I was attending, and I needed to find something closer to home.

It was during my search for another Adventist church that I "happened" to stumble onto Life Assurance Ministries. Suddenly I began to understand what had been wrong in my church; I began to realize why conflict couldn't be resolved and why people couldn't keep the rules. They didn't know the gospel!

Thanks to my time in rehab, I had met Jesus, but I had still been bound by a belief in an investigative judgment. I was still living under the old covenant law and believed I was living my life under probation waiting for Jesus to finish going through the books of remembrance. Now, however, I was learning that Jesus had completed everything necessary for my salvation—and for yours. There is no unfinished judgment, but my judgment was completed on the cross. When I trusted Jesus' death for my sins and believed God raised Him from the dead, I passed from death to life at that moment (Jn. 5:24)!

I have been set free to walk in joy and peace. I have embraced the REAL truth, and I know Jesus as my Savior and Lord.

### **Urgency to share my story**

Now I have an urgency to share my story of being set free from Adventism by the truth of Jesus. You see, I have received a terminal diagnosis, and as of this writing, I have only weeks to live. I SO want to get the truth to those still living under the old covenant and the bondage of the investigative judgment! There are so many sincere Adventists who need to know the truth.

I have found that my diagnosis and prognosis cause people to listen to me who would otherwise ignore me. I want to use the days remaining to me to tell the truth about Jesus and to help Adventists who are like I was to discover the freedom and peace that I have come to know in Jesus. †

**Sarah Luke** has dedicated her remaining days to sharing the gospel with as many people as the Lord allows her to influence.

# DEAR ADVENTIST, HAVE YOU MULLED OVER MILLER?

Many Adventists today are unfamiliar with the historic facts of Adventism. Lisa Winn wishes to re-acquaint them with the roots of their faith. This column is intended to encourage Adventist readers to look honestly at the foundation of Adventism. One may believe on the basis of tradition, or one may realize that tradition is different from historical facts. Readers may need to re-examine their beliefs and prayerfully peruse the rest of this publication.

As a child, I was told the story of William Miller predicting the return of Christ and of the Great Disappointment which followed: when Jesus did not return on October 22, 1844, a small, faithful band of Adventists formed what is now Seventh-day Adventism.<sup>1</sup> Despite his legendary role, however, Miller remains a mystery—I don't remember being taught much about the man. Do you?

Ellen White says Miller “possessed strong mental powers, disciplined by thought and study... [he] could not but command respect and esteem...”<sup>2</sup> She paints a picture of him as “that chosen one” whose mind angels guided to understand hidden Bible prophecies.<sup>3</sup> According to her writings, those angels only guided him so far, because: “Errors that had been long established in the church prevented [him] from arriving at a correct interpretation of an important point in the prophecy.”<sup>4</sup> Miller had assumed the sanctuary that needed cleansing was the earth—not, as Ellen came to believe, the “heavenly sanctuary.”

One gets the impression that Ellen White knew Miller quite well, but she did not know him personally at all. She first heard him speak in 1840—nine years after he began preaching.<sup>5</sup> Ellen was only twelve at the time. By then, he had already become “Father Miller”—a distant, almost abstract figurehead of the movement, which, having already transformed from Millerism into Adventism, had taken on a life of its own.<sup>6</sup>

## End of the Revolution

William Miller was born in 1782, just as the American Revolution was coming to a close. Americans were anxiously seeking God's approval. Reformers set out to make America an “ideal society, in which the major forms of social evil could be done away.”<sup>7</sup> Miller was raised a Baptist and grew up working on his parents' farm.<sup>8</sup> Not fully understanding the gospel, he felt he needed to “be good and to sacrifice to earn God's love,” at which he failed, of course, “and his Calvinist heritage indicated dire consequences.”<sup>9</sup> Discouraged, he began “to doubt the reasonableness of Scripture and the authority on which it rested... Trying to please such an arbitrary deity was frustrating...”<sup>10</sup> So, he became a Deist—the popular philosophy of the day. At the age of twenty-one, Miller married and left home, thoroughly rejecting his roots—a blow to his family.

When the war of 1812 broke out, Miller, a patriot, marched off to join the battle. He hoped to find some nobler qualities in man—

which he did—but ultimately was confronted with death and futility.<sup>11</sup> During this time, typhoid claimed the lives of several loved-ones, including his own father.<sup>12</sup> The finality of death terrified him. Suddenly Deism, with no hope of an afterlife, felt arbitrarily cold.<sup>13</sup> Drawn to his religious roots, he moved his whole family back to his childhood home to live with his widowed mother, hoping her to be a religious influence on his children.<sup>14</sup> Ellen White says Miller's mother “was a woman of sterling piety.”<sup>15</sup> Curiously enough, she never accepted her son's prediction.<sup>16</sup>

In the fall of 1816, Miller came to Christ. He desired to prove the Bible consistent and set out to harmonize seeming contradictions. Becoming obsessed with prophecy, he utilized the popular day/year principle to determine the time of Christ's imminent return. He was not alone. When Napoleon temporarily dethroned the Pope in 1798, excited English scholars interpreted this as the “beast” receiving the “deadly wound” of Revelation 13:3, thus providing a road map from which, as was believed, they could predict Christ's coming. Miller, too, viewed Bonaparte's military campaign as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy.<sup>17</sup> It made sense—Jesus would indeed return “on or before 1843.”<sup>18</sup>

## Miller a Freemason

He kept this revelation to himself for almost a decade, but then a dream compelled him to share his apocalyptic message with others. There was just one problem: William Miller was a Freemason<sup>19</sup> (the dream itself had been filled with Masonic imagery). While he felt that Masonry improved society,<sup>20</sup> Christians were railing against the organization. How could he, a Mason, speak publicly without coming under attack? Miller grudgingly resigned from the Masons near the end of 1831. Less than a month later, he began to preach.

Miller's message couldn't have come at a more opportune time. The Second Great Awakening had just hit its peak. Traditionalism was on the decline, fervor was in the air, and Christians were yearning more for religious experience than sound doctrine. Charles Finney wrote, “If the church will do her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years.”<sup>21</sup> While Miller himself was part of the old school religion, ironically it was this revivalism that best explains his success. Pastors, eager for new members, indiscriminately invited him to speak at their churches.<sup>22</sup> Over the course of a decade, he was able to share his message with thousands. And so, Millerism was born.<sup>23</sup>

In 1838, Joshua Himes heard Miller speak and joined the cause. A social reformer, he was excited for the “global regeneration” Christ's second coming would bring.<sup>24</sup> Himes started the movement's first newspaper, *The Signs of the Times*. Under his direction, Millerism became Adventism, growing exponentially. Adventists started holding camp meetings for which Himes commissioned “The Great Tent”—the largest canopy in the world, holding up to six thousand people. They even sold Miller-themed merchandise.<sup>25</sup>

While William Miller desired Adventism to unite Christians, the opposite happened. These camp meetings gave parasitic preachers, who would set up side tents, a platform from which to espouse often-heretical heterodoxies: Annihilationism, Judaization, Proto-Pentecostalism, Perfectionism, and more. Himes did his best to remove them from the premises.

Furthermore, not all Christians believed Miller's prediction. When, in a church, some became Adventists and others did not, division arose. If not excommunicated, Adventists often chose to leave. Miller disapproved:

...some of my brethren began to call the churches Babylon, and to urge that it was the duty of Adventists to come out of them. With this I was much grieved, as not only the effect was very bad, but I regarded it as a perversion of the word of God, a wresting of Scripture.<sup>26</sup>

"We expected the personal coming of Christ at that time; and now to contend that we were not mistaken, is dishonest. We should never be ashamed to frankly confess all our errors. I have no confidence in any of the new theories that have grown out of that movement, viz., that Christ then came as the Bridegroom, that the door of mercy was closed, that there is no salvation for sinners, that the seventh trumpet then sounded, or that it was a fulfilment of prophecy in any sense."<sup>28</sup>

#### Dear Adventist,

William Miller never became a Seventh-day Adventist. Ellen White claimed he had lost his strength because Adventists were "opposing one another," and that "a human influence was exerted to keep him in darkness..."<sup>29</sup> His main "influence" was clearly Joshua Himes—the Joshua Himes who had thrown his heart into the movement, who loved William Miller like a

## ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE AGONY MILLER FELT WHEN JESUS DID NOT RETURN. HE HAD DEVOTED SO MUCH OF HIS LIFE TO ADVENTISM THAT EMOTIONALLY, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO LET GO.

### Adventism Splinters

Having simply suggested the return of Christ around 1843, Miller originally did not believe in date-setting. The longer the movement continued, however, the more confident he became in his prediction. He eventually proclaimed that Christ would probably return by March 21, 1844. The time came—and went. Unwilling to let go, Adventists began searching for future dates. Most assuredly, Christ was tarrying, they said. It was Samuel S. Snow who came up with October 22, 1844. He had incorrectly calculated this day as the Jewish Day of Atonement, and it seemed a likely time for the Savior to make an appearance. The new date spread like wildfire.<sup>27</sup> Miller, uncertain, waited until a couple weeks before the fateful day to endorse it. Everyone knows what didn't happen next.

After the disappointment, Himes tried to keep the movement united; however, many forlorn, churchless Adventists, searching for meaning, fell prey to a myriad of "prophets," alternative explanations, and heresies. Adventism began to splinter. We know some of these offshoots today as Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Bible Students, The Church of God (Seventh Day), Christadelphians, and many, many more.

One can only imagine the agony Miller felt when Jesus did not return. He had devoted so much of his life to Adventism that emotionally, it was difficult to let go. Initially, he entertained various propositions that something had happened on October 22 (how could he not?), but in his final Apology, he stated,

father; the Joshua Himes who sang hymns with Miller as he passed away (Himes reached down and closed his dead friend's eyes).<sup>30</sup> This was the same Himes who saved all of Miller's letters, and who penned the introduction to his biography (from which White later quoted).

Again, White never knew Miller personally, and after the disappointment, as Adventism persisted (still awaiting Christ's soon return), the Seventh-day Adventist tent was among those heretical groups that Himes<sup>31</sup> would remove at conferences.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, one should note that Miller vehemently denied being anyone's puppet. His post-disappointment conclusions were his own.<sup>33</sup>

A man of influence, indeed. Whose story do you believe? †

#### ENDNOTES ON NEXT PAGE

**Lisa Winn** was raised in the Adventist school system and is a graduate of Pacific Union College. She became a born again Christian in 2007 upon thoroughly examining Adventist teachings and carefully studying the Bible. She lives in Yucaipa with her husband Jonathan and their two children, Daniel and Héloïse. They are members of Fellowship in the Pass Church in Beaumont, California.



**Veganism and giving offense**

I enjoyed the article by Stephen Baxter, “In and Out of Adventism”, in the Spring, 2017, issue of *Proclamation!*. Some of it sounded very much like me.

I also enjoyed Stephen Pitcher’s “*The Clear Word* on Food” very much. While I do agree with a lot of the article, although I am still processing it, it seems to overlook some things...The article seems to focus on the Bible verses defending meat, but it ignores...the historical significance of these teachings in Paul’s times.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and wrote his letters primarily to newly converted Greeks about subject matter that concerned the Greeks. ...Vegans got their start in Greece about 500 BC. The Greeks felt that it was immoral, unethical, and wrong to use any animal or part of an animal without its permission. (This idea is basically a part of New Age philosophy today.) So, many of Paul’s statements such as not eating to give offense (Rom. 14:20) and not judging those who eat meat and those who don’t (Rom. 14:3), apply equally to vegans and to meat-eaters.

BAKERSFIELD, CA

**Editor’s response:** *Proclamation!* ran an article on the source of the Adventist health message in the Spring, 2015, issue. Author

Cheryl Granger traced the Adventists’ emphasis on vegetarianism and the supposed ill-effects of meat-eating to ancient paganism and showed its similarity to new-age ideas. The article is entitled “The Seventh-day Adventist Health Message: From where did it come?” and may be accessed here: [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org).

**Deep dive into *The Clear Word***

I appreciated the last hard copy of *Proclamation!* With each issue I see more “layers of the onion” to peel back, and I see how convoluted Adventist teachings are.

Please give my special thanks to Steve Pitcher for his deep dive into *The Clear Word* (“*The Clear Word* On Food”). Stunning.

DANA POINT, CA

**You’ve made Satan happy**

I’m ashamed of this magazine and you can count on us to toss it in the trash can! Please remove our name from your mailing list. We do feel sorry for all of you who have lost your way. You have made one person happy—his name is Satan.

AVINGER, TX

**A special mission**

I want you to know you are in my prayers regularly. I thank God for Bible students at *Proclamation!* magazine who bravely cut

through false doctrine taught in Adventist schools and churches. My mother would never let me read anything that was not published by Pacific Press [an Adventist publishing house]. I was never allowed to question my Adventist faith, and the Lord knows I had many questions as I read Romans and Galatians.

In the early years of my marriage, we were best friends with an Adventist minister and his wife. The minister had graduated cum laude from Andrews seminary and struggled with doctrine. He was pastor of a large Adventist church in Washington state. Finally, after five years, he painfully turned in his ministerial credentials to the North Pacific Union Conference. He and his family hit hard times for a while.

Every weekend, our family hopped on a ferry and crossed Puget Sound to their little island home. We always brought lot of food supplies: pot pies, vegetables, salad, and pies. We were their sounding board. Those were wonderful times! They helped us all to know what we believed and not look to the Adventist commentary for support.

God bless you dear people. You are called to a special mission—to bring truth to those deceived by false doctrine.

SACRAMENTO, CA

**Good grief, Pitcher!**

It seems at times with you guys nothing is sacred! Now, the Bible tells us we have the right—with no restrictions—to eat anything and everything one’s heart desires! Well, go for it, Bro. Pitcher; eat to your heart’s content!

However, my friend, let it be said, the inspired health information, 150 years before it’s time, has produced a group of people that it is widely known live an average of eight to ten years longer than the average population and with fewer illnesses, on the average, as well! Why? Because they have adhered, generally speaking, to a diet promoted by a woman with only a third grade education. Adventists and Ellen White have been witness to the world about a healthful diet years before one became fashionable!

It almost sounds like it could be inspired information!

Oh, by the way—truth is always the truth regardless of whether we accept it or not!

See you when I awake!  
RETIRED PASTOR,  
ROANOKE, VA

**Carefully crafted articles**

Please keep me on the mailing list! I am a retired evangelical pastor, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I

**DEAR ADVENTIST ENDNOTES** CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

<sup>1</sup>“Adventism” and “Adventist” in this article are used in the broader sense, to describe the movement itself out of which Seventh-day Adventism later evolved.

<sup>2</sup>*Christ in His Sanctuary*, Ellen G. White, p. 63.3.

<sup>3</sup>*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, White, p.128.1.

<sup>4</sup>*The Great Controversy*, White, 1888, p. 351.2.

<sup>5</sup>*Christian Experience and Teachings*, White, p. 16.1.

<sup>6</sup>*God’s Strange Work*, David L. Rowe, p. 157. I have relied heavily on this book and highly recommend it. Later footnotes abbreviated “GSW.”

<sup>7</sup>*The Rise of Adventism*, Edwin S. Gaustad, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>GSW, Rowe, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup>GSW, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>GSW, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup>GSW, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup>GSW, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup>GSW, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup>GSW, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup>*Christ in His Sanctuary*, White, p. 48.1.

<sup>16</sup>GSW, Rowe, p. 121.

<sup>17</sup>*Memoirs of William Miller*, Sylvester Bliss, p. 147.

<sup>18</sup>GSW, Rowe, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup>At one point, Miller had been a Grand Master Mason.

<sup>20</sup>GSW, Rowe, p. 91.

<sup>21</sup>*Rise of Adventism*, Gaustad, p. 145.

<sup>22</sup>GSW, Rowe, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup>GSW, p. 156-157.

<sup>24</sup>GSW, p. 160.

<sup>25</sup>GSW, p. 162-164.

<sup>26</sup>*Memoirs of William Miller*, Bliss, p. 274.

<sup>27</sup>GSW, p. 186.

<sup>28</sup>*Apology and Defense*, William Miller p. 29.

<sup>29</sup>*Early Writings*, White 257.1.

<sup>30</sup>GSW, Rowe, p. 224.

<sup>31</sup>Ironically, Himes, himself, was eventually ostracized from Adventism.

<sup>32</sup>Letter 12, 1869, par. 12, White.

<sup>33</sup>GSW, p. 220, 222.

very much appreciate your carefully crafted articles. A number of former Adventists, including pastors, have attended our church, and they have been a tremendous blessing to us.

WICHITA, KS

### Religion is not credible

Thank you for the many years of sending me your magazine. I am, however, asking that you no longer send the magazine as I no longer find any religion credible, or useful, whether it be Adventism or any other form of Christianity or monotheism.

*Proclamation!* is a well-done publication, and I have no animosity or hostility towards your mission—only indifference.

There are many others who would better profit from and appreciate your journal, and your money is better spent sending to those individuals. Again, thank you for sharing your religious journey, but I am moving on.

BERRIEN SPRINGS, MI

**Editor's note:** The above letter is a grief to us, and it demonstrates the fact that the seeds of agnosticism lie at the heart of Adventism.

Adventism teaches Ellen White's warnings that to reject her writings and to reject the Sabbath will ultimately mean that people will reject the Bible and God Himself. Consequently, many people who find Adventism to be untenable and impossible to observe properly drift away into unbelief and agnosticism.

These people seldom reason that they were taught the Bible wrongly. Instead, they reason that the Bible doesn't apply to them and is illogical and rigid. Because they cannot trust the Adventist Jesus and his Heavenly Father, they dismiss the real revelation of the Trinity found in Scripture. If "the Truth" they learned proves tawdry and false, they certainly will not venture to find real Christianity—something they have been taught is a deception and the product of Roman Catholicism.

### Feel less weird

Yes, please keep me on the mailing list! I like knowing there are other former Adventists out there; it helps me feel less weird about how I was raised.

Keep up the good work!

MIDDLEBURG, FL

### Does Paul teach the IJ?

Hi folks, I have forgotten the explanation about this verse. A friend of mine is using it to support the investigative judgement:

WE DO FEEL SORRY FOR ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE LOST YOUR WAY. YOU'VE MADE ONE PERSON HAPPY—HIS NAME IS SATAN.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

ALBERTA, CANADA

**Editor's response:** You need to read the verses before and after verse 10. The context is Paul's chastising of the Corinthians for developing factions around the teachers that they personally prefer: "I am of Cephas." "I am of Paul." "I am of Apollos." "I am of Christ." He reprimanded them for their division, and then he said that he had laid a foundation that could not be duplicated nor changed: he had laid the foundation of Christ for them.

Others, then, would come and build on that foundation. Some would build well, using permanent building materials such as gold, silver, and precious stones. Others would build with perishable materials—wood, hay, and straw. Paul then says that everyone's works will come into judgment, and the fire would prove the quality of each man's work.

Some people do work within the church that is not gospel-founded. (Please note that Paul is speaking to believers, not unbelievers.)

Next Paul says that work that is not of the quality of precious metals and jewels will be destroyed in the fire, but the person himself will be saved, as one escaping through the flames. This passage is not about an investigative judgment; it is referring to the fire of "that day"—an escha-

tological term that refers to Jesus' coming judgment of the world. On that day of judgment, the fire will destroy work we do that is not based on the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

If we have truly been saved, even if we do things that have no eternal, gospel value, we will be burned. If, however, our works are gospel works and are eternal in quality and value, we will receive rewards (not specified but promised) for those works we did while in the flesh before we died.

Importantly, this passage is not teaching that people can lose their salvation if their works are burned up. Salvation is never a reward for our works. Rather, it is always a free gift given to those who place their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

This passage is not describing an investigative judgment; the verses about works being burned must be read in the context of the entire passage!

### Kudos to Chris

Yes! Please keep me on the list to receive *Proclamation!* I am a

former Adventist having grown up from childhood trying to make sense of their doctrines as compared to Scripture. The magazine has been extremely helpful in guiding me through Scripture as I continue to unlearn the errors that I grew up with. Please pray for me and my husband as we search for a permanent Bible-teaching church home.

I wish to express my appreciation to Chris Lee for the recent article entitled "In Death Are We Present With the Lord?" It was clear and concise on what the Bible says about what happens when we die. Thank you, Chris! Thank you so much to each and every one of you for your commitment to teaching the truth directly from Scripture.

CENTENNIAL, CO

### Doug Batchelor Foiled

I have a quick testimony you might want to print in your magazine.

A brother in Christ, Delroy Reid, has sent me a subscription to your *Proclamation!* magazine. I appreciated it but really haven't felt the need for it since I haven't come into contact with Adventists in my area. Also, my area of apologetics is more focused on Islam

## LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES

### 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

and the unfortunate liberal drift in greater Evangelicalism today.

But, praise God, I knew there was a reason I have been receiving your magazines! A brother in our church wanted to share a DVD with me about Revelation, and he thought it would be good to share with our class at church.

You guessed it; it was “Amazing Facts” by Doug Batchelor! I had thought this guy was an Adventist, and then I watched the DVD and recognized it immediately.

Now, as pastor, I will kindly share with my brother that we cannot show his DVD in church, but now, thanks to your efforts, I can give him an in-depth explanation as to why this teaching is wrong and why the Adventists are in error.

Thank you for your efforts; they are not in vain! Keep up the good work!

PASTOR JOSEPH ALGHRARY  
MOORESVILLE, NC

#### Burdened and desperate

My children and I need out of this relationship. We are abused emotionally and verbally and put out of the house very regularly. I'm not allowed to pursue an education. I suffered a mental breakdown some months ago. Please help us. I need a place to go. I don't believe in EGW's teachings. My husband said I'm a demon, that the devil has

taken over me. I need peace of mind.

VIA EMAIL

**Editor's response:** Adventism provides a place for serious abuse and dysfunction to hide. Unfortunately, the incidence of hidden but severe abuse among Adventists is

## GOD'S DESTRUCTION OF SIN IS ALWAYS A MERCY, NOT A CRUELTY.

far more common than people want to believe. If you or your children are in danger, you need to find a shelter or other safe place to go. Meanwhile, you need to become anchored in truth and reality and in the absolute fact of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Read through the gospel of John and actually journal it, copying out even a few verses each day. Read the book of Galatians each day for a month, asking God to reveal what He knows you need to know. The Lord knows your circumstances and is not surprised; He will give you courage and trust in Him, and He will guide you. He has promised to be the husband of the widows and the Father of the

fatherless, and He will guide you to safety. It may be frightening to change your circumstances, but He has promised to comfort you and to give you family in Jesus. He asks us to trust Him and to be willing, if necessary, to lose what we most cherish for His sake. He will never forsake His children.

#### Treading dangerous ground

I am a Seventh-day Adventist in good standing and in agreement with the organized church. As a committed believer in the traditional doctrines of the church, I am well-satisfied with my understanding of orthodox Christian theology. The heretical articles in your journal sadden me, and I feel nothing less than pity for the souls who are deceived thereby...I will continue to pray for you, knowing that Mrs. White confronted much dissent in her day as well. Please realize that you are treading on dangerous ground at odds with our Creator. He is coming soon and, at that time, He will separate the real chaff from the authentic and mature

wheat. Until then, the door to confession with contrition and repentance is open to us all.

BURLINGTON, NC

#### Robbing God?

The Spring, 2017, issue of *Proclamation!* spoke to me like no other to date! Praise the Lord for all who shared and mostly for the Holy Spirit who makes it clear indeed!

I could speak to many points of interest, but there is one I will mention. I am wondering why Mr. Barker didn't mention Malachi 3:10 in his brilliant (and very thought provoking) article on the Adventist fundamental belief on tithing. It seems to my wife and me that to address how God is “robbed” would have been a good place to further explain tithe. We love you all!

ALBEMARIE, NC

**Editor's response:** Adventists use Malachi 3:10 as a proof-text for tithe-paying: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”

Here is the context. Malachi was likely contemporary with Nehemiah and was writing to the Jews who had returned to the Promised Land after their Babylonian exile. They were rebuilding their temple and the city of Jerusalem and reestablishing their community. Malachi begins chapter 3 by prophesying the Messiah's coming, “the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight.” He continues by saying that this One will purify them “so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.”

He continues by reiterating God's promises never to destroy His people and calls them to return to the Lord, reminding them that historically they have persisted in turning away from God's statutes.

Then Malachi tells Israel that they are robbing God by not giving Him the required covenant-commanded tithes and offerings. These gift and tithes were not random

## WILL YOU RECEIVE THE NEXT ISSUE OF PROCLAMATION! MAGAZINE?

**W**e at Life Assurance Ministries are committed to continuing to make *Proclamation!* available free. We want to share the gospel free of charge (1 Cor. 9:18), and our deep love both for those who share our Adventist past and for those with whom we now share in the body of Christ compels us to live for the sake of exposing deception and clarifying Truth. Our next issue will only be mailed to those who are either a supporter of this ministry, or have requested the magazine.

#### We are asking you to respond

You may respond one of two ways:

**1. You may email us at [proclamation@gmail.com](mailto:proclamation@gmail.com) and say “Yes! Please keep me on the list”—and be sure you give us your name and current mailing address.**

**2. You may mail in the envelope inside this issue of the magazine and check the box “Yes, please keep sending *Proclamation!*” Be sure that you include your name and address.**

Finally, we are grateful for your gifts. If the Lord leads you to be a supporter of Life Assurance Ministries, you may donate online by going to [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org) and clicking the “Online Donations” button in the upper right corner. You may also mail a check in the envelope enclosed in this issue. We thank God for your gifts. Life Assurance Ministries exists because of partnerships with you!

free-will offerings; they were explicitly defined in the law. Malachi continues by reiterating the Mosaic covenant promises to Israel: that if they keep the law and do what God commanded, He would bless them; if they ignore the covenant, God would send curses: their land would not bear fruit; their vines would drop their grapes.

We cannot take God's Mosaic covenant-promises that He made specifically to Israel and apply them to us. God's promises included promises not only for their personal care but for the prosperity of the land of Israel which He had given to them—if they kept the law faithfully.

Jesus, however, inaugurated a new covenant, a covenant to which Malachi referred before this reminder to pay tithes. Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant enacted on better promises than the Mosaic covenant (Heb. 8:6).

The new covenant does not depend upon obedience to the law and its regulations. Rather, it depends upon our belief in our new High Priest who is not descended from Levi but is designated according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:11). Under the new covenant, God doesn't give us commands to pay tithes. Instead, He asks us to trust Him with everything we are and everything we have.

The specific promises to Israel based on the levitical priesthood and the Mosaic covenant do not apply to the church, the body of Christ. Instead, we have a new law, the law of Christ (Gal. 2:6) which replaced the Mosaic law when the levitical priests were replaced by our High Priest in Melchizedek's order (Heb. 7:12). Now God has promised to supply everything we need. Jesus told us not to worry even about what we will eat, drink, or wear; our Father knows we need these things. If we seek the kingdom of God first, He will provide all these things as well (Mt. 6:25-34).

#### Can I follow a God who kills?

Most of my life I read and studied the New Testament. I have decided to delve into the Old Testament. I am having so many

questions and actual heart ache over the Old Testament. For example, this morning I was reading Numbers 31, and it has me almost crying. The Old Testament has so much killing. For example, there are so many sacrifices. It seems so much like works to me. When I read this morning from Numbers 31:15 and on, I was close to tears. I cannot shake the awful feeling I have—murdering all the men of Midian and saving the women and children...If I keep on with the Old Testament it will drag me down to the lowest of lows. What about His love and His yoke being light? Can I follow a God who kills women and enslaves virgins and children? I am asking God these questions with no answers.

ALBERTA, CANADA

**Editor's response:** I understand your questions. First, the Adventist worldview makes creatures' free will the prime "value" in the universe, not God's holiness. We were taught that God

## THE MAGAZINE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL IN GUIDING ME THROUGH SCRIPTURE...

limits His power in order to be fair to us. He would "never" impose Himself on us.

The Bible, however, reveals that God is sovereign and holy; creatures are to worship Him, and sin is an affront to Him. God said in Eden that sin yields death; the sacrifices were a "substitute" death that would enable Israel to worship God without being stricken dead by God's holiness. Blood was required as an atonement for sin.

Animal deaths, however, cannot pay for human sin. They foreshadowed a perfect human substitute who would pay for all human sin. Meanwhile, God's people had to bring sacrifices in order to approach His holiness and be forgiven. Otherwise, their sins kept them separated from Him.

The deaths of the Midianites is an example of God's protecting His people from the corruption of demonic pagan worship. Numbers 31:16 says this attack was God's judgment on the Midianites, through Balaam's advice, to infiltrate Israelite ranks and lead them into sin. God had intervened with Balaam, keeping him from cursing Israel, but Balaam refused to honor Him and helped Midian lead Israel into sin. God judged this sin of Midian's.

Second, Adventism did not teach us the truth about the nature of man. We learned that we were "body + breath", and a breathing body WAS a soul. We learned man did not have an immaterial soul/spirit that survives the body at death. Thus, God's judgments seemed cruel; if God commanded that someone die, we believed he would cease to exist. We saw God's judgments as arbitrary cruelty to people who were probably doing the best they could.

The story of Job helped me. God ultimately doubled the animals he lost in the fire and storm, but he only got ten more children. As an Adventist I was bothered by the fact that his wealth doubled, but his children were merely "replaced". When I realized that the "real us" does not cease with death, I saw that God actually did double Job's children. When his first ten children died, their spirits went to the Lord. God gave him ten more, and now, in eternity, Job has his 20 children. None of them ceased to exist.

The biblical truth about man has helped me understand God's Old Testament judgments. His judgments occur when people persistently refuse to believe. Romans 1:18-20 says God's divine nature

and eternal power are clearly revealed in what has been made "so that all men are without excuse", but unbelievers "suppress the truth in unrighteousness". In other words, God judges those who suppress what is evident to them.

Moreover, 2 Peter 3:9 says God is patient and does not want any to perish but to come to repentance. For example, in Genesis 15:16, God tells Abraham that his descendants will come back to the land "in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

God gave Israel "the oracles of God", as Paul says. His commands that they be separate from the nations were to protect them from deception and false gods.

The massacre in Numbers is an example of God judging the wicked because their wickedness had become dangerous to His people, and the wicked themselves were persistently unrepentant. Importantly, those who died did not cease to exist. If people died who believed what God had revealed, He took their spirits to be with Him. If they were simply unrepentant, He still keeps their spirits for His final day of judgment. Those who survived were brought into a God-fearing society instead of a pagan one marked by human sacrifices to angry gods.

Scripture tells us that God knows His own, and not one will be lost (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-14). God's destruction of evil, as in the cases of the flood and of His commands to destroy evil people, is part of His protection of His own creation.

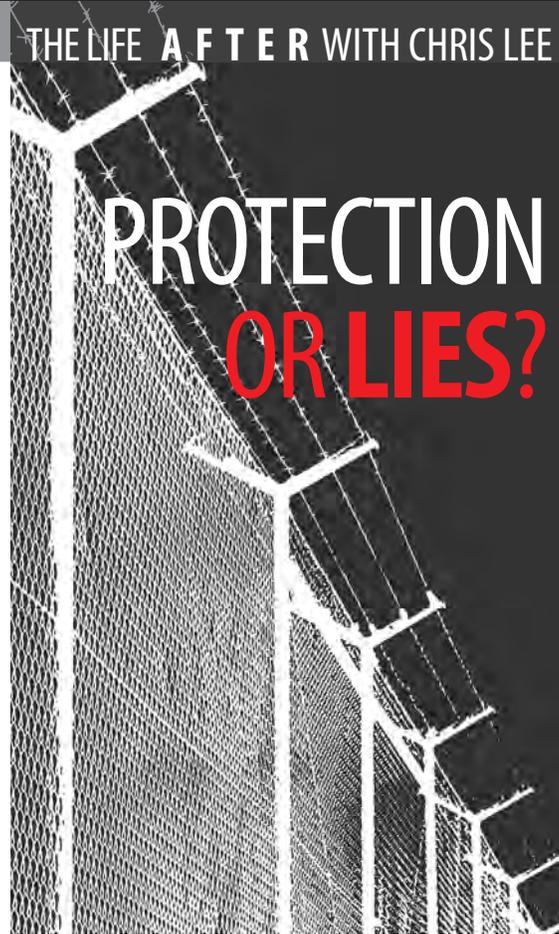
God's destruction of sin is always a mercy, not a cruelty. Moreover, our sovereign God never destroys people who "haven't had a chance to hear". God reveals Himself and draws us to Himself, and all are without excuse. We can trust Him.†

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:  
**Editor, Proclamation! Magazine**  
**P.O. Box 7776**  
**Redlands, CA 92375**  
OR EMAIL EDITOR:  
**proclamation@gmail.com**

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PROCLAMATIONMAGAZINE.COM

THE LIFE AFTER WITH CHRIS LEE



©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/RAMONCABRETERO

I recently re-watched M. Night Shyamalan's 2004 film *The Village*. Though arguably one of his lesser works, I found myself unexpectedly weeping during the denouement [spoilers for the film's ending follow].

The film introduces us to the residents of a small Pennsylvania village. Though not stated, the village's protective log wall, the simple structures, and the residents' manner of dress and speaking suggest a Puritan settlement in the 17th or 18th century. It is an isolated, insular, tight knit community.

There are a lot of rules—mostly meant to protect the residents from what is outside the defensive wall patrolled by watchmen. Villagers live in fear of the creatures beyond the wall that might attack at any time but which apparently live in uneasy truce with the villagers. The villagers must never go in the woods just beyond the wall of the compound and must avoid the color red which attracts the creatures. The elders strictly enforce the rules. For the most part, the elders are kindly enough, but they are unyielding as they must protect the people in their charge from what is outside their doors.

Few question the rules. There are enough brief sightings of the creatures or signs of their recent presence that few question the wisdom of the elders. However, after the death of a child for want of medicine followed by a potentially fatal stabbing of her love interest, Ivy, the blind daughter of the head elder, decides to leave the

village to seek medicine for her people and for her dying love.

Out of compassion, Ivy's father secretly allows her to go and shares a closely held secret. There is much to fear beyond the walls and the elders have been trying to protect the vil-

lagers and provide them with a better life. However, sightings of creatures in the woods are a hoax. The elders have perpetuated this lie and put many rules in place, nobly intending to keep their people sheltered from what is without.

Armed with this knowledge, Ivy blindly enters the woods, bravely faces opposition from those who would stop her, and perilously makes it to the other side, finally encountering a stone wall. Ivy scales the stone wall, goes over, and drops to the other side.

It is at this point that we see that all of the indoctrination, not just the creatures, has been a lie. Ivy stands at the edge of a modern roadway as a park ranger pulls up in his cruiser and radios headquarters, reporting the strange blind woman standing at the edge of the road in anachronistic garb.

The elders, however well intentioned, perpetuated lies, year after year, in order to protect people from the truth of life outside their sheltered community. The villagers lived in fear and

sacrifice, loaded down by legalism. It took a good deal of courage to stumble out through the woods and climb the wall of stone.

I wept. How could I not? I need not pedantically enumerate the parallels with life in Adventism. They are all too obvious to anyone reading this. But here's a thought that has stuck with me since this viewing: what did Ivy do after finding herself in reality and knowing the truth? Did she gather a few paltry bottles of meds and then go back to her life in the village hoping to "make things better from within"? Did she simply stand on the road, overwhelmed, turning back and forth between the stone wall and the roadway, tossed about by indecision and refusing the help of the park ranger? Or, did she accept the help offered and continue in courage, embracing the truth she had discovered, and forging a life based on the reality of that truth?

I hope Ivy started living the life after. I hope you do, too. †



**Chris Lee** lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with his wife, Carmen, and daughters, Ashlyn and Alyssa. They attend the Lincoln Berean Church. Chris is a self-described "theology junkie" whose mission is to proclaim the unfathomable grace of Christ in a clear, understandable, and Biblical way. Chris is the editor of the *Proclamation!* Blog at ProclamationMagazine.com. You may contact Chris by email at [ambulator@gmail.com](mailto:ambulator@gmail.com).