

THE DIRTY BLOOD PROBLEM

EXPOSED BY GOD'S WORD

ProclamationMagazine.com

Proclamation!

FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS
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VOLUME 19, ISSUE 1



JESUS IS NOT AN
OLD COVENANT PRIEST



COLLEEN TINKER

DANIEL AND REVELATION NEVER MADE SENSE

It was the spring of 1974. I had just finished my junior year at Walla Walla College (now University), and I was staying on campus to complete some Bible credits during summer school. In fact, I could hardly believe my good fortune; I was taking Daniel and Revelation from the dean of the theology department, Gordon Balharrie! At last, I thought, I would figure out the details of 1844, the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the timeline for the end times.

I had memorized the dates of the 2300-day prophecy and drawn diagrams of the tabernacle

DR. BALHARRIE... THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT HAD TO SEE THAT THE DOCTRINES HE TAUGHT WERE CONTRIVED.

furniture; I had read *The Great Controversy* for Bible class; I was clear that a Sunday Law was coming—but no matter how hard I tried, the details never quite made sense. Even when I read passages from the Bible, I couldn't figure out how they meshed with the timelines I had learned. The Bible words seemed vague when my teachers or textbooks explained what they meant.

Now, though, it would all be clear. Dr. Balharrie himself would teach the class, and I would finally understand Adventist doctrine and eschatology!

A few days into the class, however, I was fighting the old familiar confusion. Even with Dr. Balharrie's notes, the details were not resolving. Even the dean of theology could not explain the details of Daniel's and John's prophecies in any logical way. In fact, I spent that summer session struggling to stay awake and fighting profound disappointment. The business of a time prophecy ending in 1844 was simply unclear to me, and I couldn't track with the familiar leaps of interpretation that made a call to worship the God who made heaven and earth (Rev. 14:6) a command to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

The summer session ended, and my disillusionment was complete. Dr. Balharrie didn't even finish his curriculum. The last part of the class he simply left untaught.

In retrospect, I have a hunch that Dr. Balharrie himself couldn't make the pieces fit. The Adventist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation simply makes no contextual sense, and the chair-

man of the department had to see that the doctrines he taught were contrived.

As I've rebuilt my understanding of prophecy and the end times through Bible study and through hearing expository preaching, I've come to see that the core of the unique Adventist doctrine of Jesus' "sanctuary service" hides a dark reality: the Adventist Jesus is not a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, as Hebrews declares. Moreover, the shed blood of the Adventist Jesus actually defiles heaven, and heaven is not cleansed until Satan—not Jesus—bears away the sins of the saved into the lake of fire.

In this issue of *Proclamation!* we look closely at the heart of this unique Adventist doctrine. I will show how Adventist art has imprinted us with an image of Jesus being the wrong kind of priest, and we will look at what Scripture says about the differences between levitical priests and one in the order of Melchizedek. **Russell Kelly** explains how Adventism rips the verses of Daniel 8 out of context with each other in order to create its doctrine of 1844 and the cleansing of the sanctuary.

Phil Harris describes the process of his leaving Adventism that involved his study of Leviticus 16. As he pursued that little-known chapter, He realized that Satan could not be the scapegoat that takes our sins away from us. Also in this issue, **Rick Barker** addresses the Adventist Fundamental Belief #24: "Christ's Ministry In the Heavenly Sanctuary".

Nancy Paige, granddaughter of the woman who wrote *I Was Camrigh's Secretary*, shares her faith story, and **Kelsie Petersen** brings us back to the clarifying book of Galatians. Finally, in this issue we introduce our new back page columnist **Nicole Stevenson**. She will share her insights as we all continue to live the Life After.

We pray that as you peruse this issue of *Proclamation!*, you will know that the Lord Jesus is finished with His work of atonement and is seated at the right hand of the Father. We can believe that His blood washes us clean when we trust Him, and in Him we have life! †

Your help is needed.

The costs of maintaining this ministry are high, but the results are priceless. Use the envelope in the center of this magazine today.

Proclamation!

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LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES

DO WE REALLY NEED TO THROW OUT ALL OF ELLEN'S WRITINGS?

Even though Ellen White was wrong in some places, don't you think her insights into the gospel are still relevant today?

Most of you know that last year the weekly *Proclamation!* included a short study of the first eight chapters of Romans. Now in the weekly *Proclamation!* I am going through the Gospel of John verse by verse. These two studies have probably been more meaningful to me than to our readers. There is real joy in studying the Bible contextually and looking for applications to life. Both of these books present the gospel, but they are very dissimilar. Romans provides a thorough, logical basis of justification by faith and how that faith is worked out in the life of a Christian. John's gospel is very different. He seeks to give evidence, overwhelming evidence, that Jesus is the Son of God and belief in His name (His whole divine person and work) brings eternal life. Both of these books make the gospel clear and certain, each in their distinctive ways.

Paul in Romans states:
For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23).

John puts it like this:
Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (Jn. 5:24).

WHY NOT GO STRAIGHT TO THE BOOKS OF ROMANS AND JOHN WHERE CHRIST'S CHOSEN APOSTLES MAKE THE GOSPEL CLEAR?

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, *Gospel Transformation*—which teaches what the Gospel is and accomplishes, and *Romans Alive!*—Dale's study on the first eight chapters of Romans.

Each of these books is available at Ratzlaff.com or by phoning (928) 554-1001.

One cannot contextually study these books without his/her faith in Christ and assurance of salvation being strengthened. They bring peace and joy to the heart and soul!

Why do I mention this? I often observe theological discussions on the internet, especially if they concern the gospel. Recently there have been some forty people (judging by the number of email addresses listed) that have been listing their opinions as to the nature and full understanding of "righteousness by faith". The nature and acceptance of the gospel is central to the Christian faith. Many of the entries deal with understanding or the misunderstanding of the message of Jones and Waggoner at the 1888 Minneapolis conference. Did their view of "righteousness by faith" refer to "imputed" or "imparted" righteousness? Many of the responders refer to quotations from Ellen G. White to settle the argument.

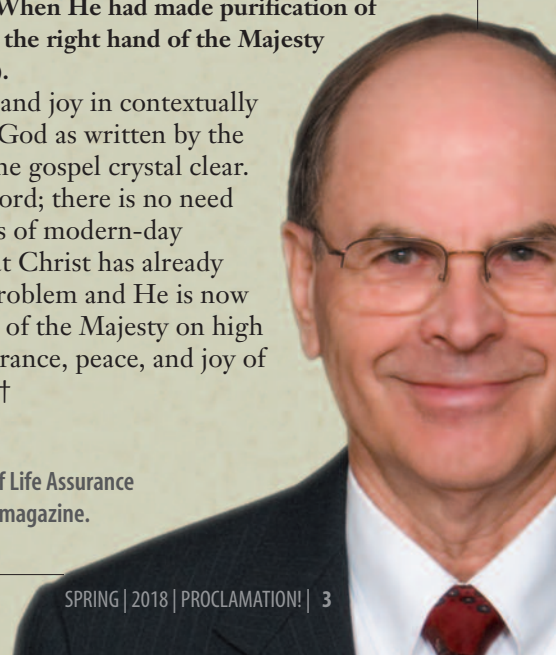
Occasionally I jump into the discussion. I asked them, "Why do you focus on what was taught by Jones and Waggoner at the '88 Conference? Why not go straight to the books of Romans and John where Christ's chosen apostles make the gospel clear?"

One person responded, saying that one cannot dismiss the deep insight of Ellen White. Even though it was admitted that she was wrong in some places, nevertheless her insight, they said, is still needed today.

Let us never forget what Hebrews 1:1-3 states:
God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

There is real peace and joy in contextually studying the Word of God as written by the apostles. They make the gospel crystal clear. Christ is God's final word; there is no need for the new revelations of modern-day prophets. To know that Christ has already taken care of the sin problem and He is now seated at the right had of the Majesty on high lets us bask in the assurance, peace, and joy of a finished atonement. †

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



GOD RESCUED ME

NANCY PAIGE

My parents were rabid Adventists who settled into the “Holy City” of Berrien Springs, Michigan, the home of Andrews University. They taught the everlasting gospel of the health message, held stop-smoking seminars, and even taught parenting classes. Both were medical professionals, pillars in the church, pedigreed Ellen White-worshippers, tithe payers, mission-minded, outwardly perfect, Sabbath-keepers-deluxe. They sacrificed to put my brothers and me through Andrews University schools. We were little super Adventists.

When I was about 12, my parents gathered my two brothers and me for a family conference. We were told that we had a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs, and food to eat. We did not need anything. From that point on, they informed us, we did not need them. They were now going to spend their efforts on truly needy people.

Publicly they were generous and caring, going overboard to show non-Adventists the face of Jesus by their righteous acts. The reality? They beat my younger brother often. I was never physically beaten but was emotionally and spiritually beaten down. They helped me believe that their anger, sadness, unhappiness, and shame were my fault. They believed my older brother could do no wrong, my younger brother was possessed, and I was stupid and vain.

In spite of the way they treated us, though, we wanted to believe that Ellen White was sent by God to straighten us out. After all, we had the truth! We were the remnant church! I used to wonder why my non-Adventist neighbors could not see this obvious reality!

My dad's parents lived close by and were very involved in our upbringing. Grandpa was a farmer, somewhat quiet, and probably the only family member who showed a bit of love. Grandma used us as her personal slaves; we did her yard work, painted her house, cleaned the apartment upstairs—and she fed us for our efforts. My parents believed that more than two meals a day was gluttony, so, for several years we were sent to school with no lunch. Grandma, on the other hand, was not able to be affectionate, but she fed us.

I remember the first time I met Ellen White's grandson, Arthur White, at Grandma's house in Niles, Michigan. He had tracked Grandma down because at the age of 18 my grandmother had been D.M. Canright's secretary. Arthur White wanted Grandma to write a book about her experiences even though 50 years earlier she had been sworn to secrecy by the church leaders never to tell of her experiences during her seven-month employment.

D.M. Canright had been one of the early Adventist pioneers; he had lived with James and Ellen White as a young man and had become an Adventist minister. He had known the Whites personally and had seen, eventually, how deceptive and cruel they were. In fact, later, he left Adventism and wrote two books about his experiences. Adventists feared the public relations scandal that Canright's witness could have on the organization, and they developed a persistent teaching that Canright had recanted before he died and said he regretted leaving Adventism.

When I met Arthur White, he was bigger than life to me. He was Sister White's grandson! He was a rock star! Grandma and Grandpa eventually moved to Berrien Springs, closer to us, before her book was finished. My brother remembers many times when Arthur drove into their dirt driveway in a black Lincoln Continental, wearing a black suit, white shirt, and black tie. Arthur and Grandma would sit at her kitchen table, poring over books, documents, letters, and manuscripts.

I realize now that Grandma wasn't really writing her own story, because Arthur would dictate parts of the manuscript to her and then demand that she fix the dictation to his liking. In fact, those meetings and the editing went on for 10 years before Grandma

was finally finished with the book. During those years, she and Grandpa took many trips to visit Canright's son. Grandma wanted Canright's diary, but the son would not give it to her. He allowed her to see it but not to take notes. Those visits seemed to upset her, and it seemed she was always angry.

One day after a particular visit to Canright's son, she came back in a very good mood. I did not know why, but it was so unusual that I remember it well. She was like the cat that swallowed the canary.

The book neared completion, but about a year or so before it was published in 1971, she became angry again. Although I didn't know the details, I knew that something about the book was upsetting her. By the time the book was released, I was 21 years old, and I read it for the first time. I remember being confused by things Grandma had written, but I did not dare question the book's contents.

Meanwhile...

By 1972, I was in a very bad marriage. My job was extremely stressful, and I was about to have a breakdown. I was really angry with God; I had been trying so hard, and my life was in disarray! Ellen White's books had been my guide, and I thought I was following them. As an adult looking for answers, I attended Daniel and Revelation conferences at least once a year, paid my tithe, was a vegetarian, attended Loma Linda University Adventist Church, worked at Loma Linda Community Hospital, headed one of the church's potluck teams, and was active in children's church. Shouldn't God have been pleased with me?

So, one night, I had a meltdown with God. If he was really God, He ought to be able to endure my anger and outrage, I reasoned. I could not hide it from Him. But where was He? What did He want of me? "I can't do this anymore! Show me, or else!" I begged.

He showed me! I can't tell you how He did it, but He gave me peace. I told God that I would go wherever He wanted me to go. For the first time in my life I decided to read the Bible for myself, but I cheated a little—I bought *The Living Bible*. Since we had been taught that we could not understand Scripture, I figured I should start with an easy-to-read version. For ten years I read the Bible every day, skipping over the things I did not understand, ignoring the guilt verses, and drinking in the comforting stories. The New Testament was truly new to me. Galatians was baffling, but I did not give up.

Ten years later God led my husband to a wonderful, godly counselor. At first I thought this provision was God answering my prayers to heal my marriage. God did heal me, but my husband became more cruel and threatening. The therapist would always pray with me and give me Scripture to fit what I was dealing with, and she brought me to the real Jesus. She shocked me when she said my parents were crazy, and I was not responsible for anyone else's unhappiness.

As I read the Scriptures and listened as my therapist taught me what was real and true, the Bible began to make sense! It no longer had to be filtered by Ellen White. It said what it said! I didn't have to make any more assumptions! Grace was grace, not "cheap grace." Jesus did not condemn me for my failures! He



loved me! I had a sense that He was telling me to keep learning; He had a great surprise for me.

I will never tell anyone that God wanted me to divorce my husband, but it became clear that there was no way to stay married under the circumstances. In fact, today I thank God that He removed me from a cult, a bad marriage, a toxic family, and really dysfunctional friends. He pulled me out of a slimy pit and put my feet in a spacious place.

My broken rule

As a critical care nurse at San Bernardino County Medical Center (now known as Arrowhead Medical Center), I worked with many residents in various specialty residencies. My number one rule was, "Never date a doctor. They have a good excuse not to come home at night." But God had other plans. He sent me the most amazing man—who happened to be a doctor. We knew, though, that we could not go further into our relationship unless we agreed on religion.

This man was so kind and gentle in giving me Scriptures which contradicted my previous beliefs. He prayed with me on one of our first dates! In fact, praying together became our standard practice for the rest of our lives. We studied the Bible, and for a year we attended church on both Sabbath and Sunday. He finally proposed to me only after we were confident that our shared faith was solidly based on God's word alone.

Two years after I left Adventism I had my first child—right in the middle of cold and flu season. I stayed home with my baby girl

I remember the first time I met Ellen White's grandson, Arthur White, at Grandma's house in Niles, Michigan. He had tracked Grandma down because at the age of 18 my grandmother had been D.M. Canright's secretary.

for the first three weeks after her birth, and on week three the pastor's wife from the Christian church we attended paid a visit. She wanted to know why I had "fallen away". She asked, "When did you become a Christian?"

Her question startled me. I had always considered myself to be a Christian—why would she ask that question? I had known all my life that I belonged to Jesus. I wanted to serve Him. In fact, His word was in my heart—I had memorized my memory verses and had believed the Bible was God's word. And yet—as an Adventist I had not known the gospel.

Weren't Adventists Christians? Even after all my experiences, I wanted to believe the Adventist church was not evil—just a little misled.

I finally "see"

About seven years ago I found Dale Ratzlaff's books and began to see the truth about Adventism more clearly—and ironically, my veil was lifted when I revisited my grandmother's book about Dudley Canright. Three years ago my friend Bob Holland, who had been in college at Andrews University when I was in grade school, asked me to tell the story of Grandma's book. As I pored over the book again, red flags I had not seen when I read it 44 years before suddenly opened my eyes to the danger of her book.

Grandma had lied! Moreover, Arthur White, who I recently discovered had dictated the writing, had not risked his reputation by putting his name on it. Apparently he helped Grandma cover her lies and added many of his own. For example, in the 1950s Grandma and Grandpa had been disfellowshipped from the Niles, Michigan, Adventist church for financial fraud. Arthur would have known that fact about Grandma, yet he claimed that my grandparents were Adventists in good standing. To my knowledge, they were never reinstated nor did they attend church, except when Arthur wanted to call attention to Grandma's book.



Nancy Paige is a former fourth-generation Adventist who left the organization 30 years ago. She and her Christian husband live in Escondido, California. Her grandmother was Carrie Johnson, author of *I Was Canright's Secretary*, and Nancy desires to support and help others find security in Jesus as they leave Adventism.

Last year, in 2017, my mother died. I inherited her stash of Ellen White books and something she never intended me to find—Grandma's original manuscript. In a surprising provision of His grace, God has been leading me to connect the clues about both my grandmother's book and about Canright's diary—the diary which Canright's son would not loan to my grandmother.

Besides my grandmother's original manuscript, there were other unexpected treasures in the collection of papers I acquired from my mom. There are letters which hint that Grandma "borrowed" Canright's diary, gave it to Arthur White, and that he then locked that diary in the White Estate vault where it apparently remains today. When I read these things, I remembered that day long ago when Grandma returned from one of her visits with Canright's son looking like the cat that swallowed the canary instead of being snappy and angry as she usually was after seeing him.

Another of those letters states that Grandma gave a death bed confession to a professor from Andrews University. Her confession, according to the letter, suggests that she may have regretted something she did to Canright, and she wished she had never written her book.

In her manuscript, Grandma stated that all her research materials—and I am guessing a copy of her original manuscript—were given to the White Estate and kept in the vault. Yet, at the request of my mom in the 1990s, the White Estate searched for them and claimed to have no record of them. Why not? Could it be that some young seminary student might have discovered that the manuscript did not agree with the published book?

Reading these letters and my grandmother's manuscript during these past months has caused me to take another look at the foundation and the nature of Adventism.

Is Adventism Christian? Is it just misled? I have come to believe that it is not merely misled; Adventist leadership intentionally covers the truth in order to protect its power, its money, and its reputation.

Will God expose the dark depths of the unbelieving General Conference? I think he will.

As for me, I praise God that He rescued me from the dark and crazy-making environment of Adventism and transferred me into the kingdom of His Beloved Son. Now I can rejoice with Paul who said in Galatians 2:20-21, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, [or the investigative judgment], then Christ died for no purpose."

The Lord has freed me from the legacy of my grandmother. †



The new church plant in Loma Linda, Redeemer Fellowship, was the site of this year’s Former Adventist Fellowship conference. Dale Ratzlaff is shown above as he teaches a plenary session on the deity of Christ.

Former Adventist Conference Held in Loma Linda

On the weekend of February 16–18, we enjoyed our thirteenth annual Former Adventist Fellowship conference—held for the first time in Loma Linda at Redeemer Fellowship! The Redeemer Fellowship congregation had just moved into their new permanent meeting place the month before, and the FAF Conference, The Doctrine of God, was the first major event hosted at the church.

Gary Inrig gave four sessions plus the Sunday sermon on the topic of The Doctrine of God. His clear teaching opened reality to all of us. Comments about his talks included, “I feel as if a weight has been taken off my shoulders.” “I was overwhelmed this weekend with how omnipotent our God is. Words cannot convey the shift in my thinking, but something wonderful happened.”

Dale Ratzlaff taught two sessions from the gospel of John. The first was on the deity of Christ, comparing John’s words about Jesus with Ellen White’s, and the second addressed the Trinity. One person said Dale’s comparison of John with Ellen White was one of his favorite sessions of the weekend.

Martin Carey presented breakout sessions on Jesus’ resurrection and ascension entitled “Forever Our Intercessor”, and Jim Valentine from the Christian Apologetics Research and Information Services led breakout sessions on Adventism and the Protestant Reformation.

Tim Martin from The Centers for Apologetics Research flew from Pennsylvania to give the Friday night address in the public meeting. His talk was entitled “Who Is the Adventist Jesus?” He showed chronologically how Ellen White’s descriptions of Jesus shifted over the years from blatantly Arian to tritheistic. He also led breakout sessions entitled “Sabbath Questions”.

Jonathan Winn led worship again this year with Roy Tinker; Nathanael Tinker, Ryan Mohler, and Audrey Tinker managed the sound, slides, and videography for the weekend, and Cheryl Granger made gorgeous centerpieces for the tables.

Sixty-nine people were registered to attend, and at least three attendees were currently Adventists.

Our Redeemer Fellowship brothers and sisters supported the conference with prayer and personal service, including Les and Fran Spoelstra who again opened their home for the final lunch on Sunday after church.

Attendees loved the weekend, and comments about it included:

“FAF is an intense, all day, Scripture-packed, discussion-packed conference. It is amazing!”

“Joyous exhaustion!”

“I had a wonderful weekend being spiritually refreshed.”

Don’t miss your next opportunity to attend a Former Adventist Fellowship conference. You won’t be disappointed. †

The Dirty Blo

RUSSELL EARL KELLY

One of the most bizarre consequences of Adventism's efforts to explain their investigative judgment is that they make Jesus the one who defiles heaven. According to their explanation of their central proof text, Daniel 8:14, Jesus' actions are worse than are those of the little horn described in Daniel 8:9–12.

Adventism reaches this horrifying conclusion by using William Miller's faulty principles of interpretation: they, as did Miller, disconnect Daniel 8:9–12 from Daniel 8:14. Re-connecting the context of these verses reveals one of Adventism's greatest errors.

Here's how they do it

Step one:

Seventh-day Adventists teach that pagan Rome is the little horn of Daniel 8:9–10 which defiled the literal sanctuary on earth by destroying the temple in Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Thus, Titus and his armies, according to Adventism, fulfilled the destructive activities of that little horn, unleashing what Daniel 9:26 calls "desolations" when they destroyed the earthly temple.

Step two:

Having established that pagan Rome is the little horn of Daniel 8:9–10 which defiled the earthly sanctuary, Adventism then morphs its interpretation of the passage. In fact, they extensively teach that papal, not pagan, Rome is the little horn of Daniel 8:11–12 which "cast down" and defiled the heavenly sanctuary. They identify the "prince of the host" in verse 11 as Jesus, and they teach that papal Rome cast Jesus out of the heavenly sanctuary by replacing His supposed heavenly ministry with their false worship involving the confessional, Sunday worship, and its mass. Context, of course, demands that the little horn of verses 9–10 is the same power as the little horn of verses 11–12, but Adventism makes them different.

In fact, this supposed merging of pagan Rome into papal Rome is the major focus of Adventist evangelists when they

preach on their doctrine of the cleansing of the sanctuary. According to the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7:25 and 8:11–13, of the "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–10, and of the beast rising out of the sea in Revelation 13:1–9, the little horn of pagan Rome merged into the little horn of papal Rome. Thus, papal Rome's supposed defilement of the heavenly sanctuary by the practices of false Sunday worship, their mass and their confessional is identified as the "transgression of desolation" in Daniel 8:13 and the "overspreading of abominations" in Daniel 9:27.

If this interpretation is correct, the sanctuary has very definitely been defiled and very definitely requires cleansing.

Adventist validating documents

This confusing interpretation of Daniel 8:9–12 is endorsed in Adventist documents. For example, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* says this: "The little horn of chapter eight [papal Rome] 'takes away the daily sacrifice' and casts down the 'place of his sanctuary' (v11), but after a period called 'two thousand and three hundred days' (v14), the sanctuary is 'cleansed' (KJV) or 'restored to its rightful state' [by Jesus]" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, 1960, "little horn," page 656).

Further, the *Adventist Bible Dictionary* says this under the entry "abomination":

"The two systems [pagan and papal Rome] are mutually exclusive, since the setting up of the abomination of desolation is accompanied by the trampling down of the sanctuary (8:13) and by the taking away of the 'daily' (11:31; 12:11).

This substitute system of worship is abominable, or detestable, because it stands in implacable opposition to that of the true God. It desolates the sanctuary by replacing its services with its own. This turn of events naturally appalls worshipers of the true God. In the symbolic prophecy of Daniel 8, it is the power represented by the "little horn" that terminates the worship of the true God in His sanctuary and institutes a false system of worship in its place (8:9–12). At the end of "two thousand and three hundred days" the sanctuary was to be cleansed (v 14) by the

Good Problem

restoration of the worship of the true God” (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, 1960, “abomination,” p. 7).

Notice that the “two systems” are pagan and papal Rome. According to this explanation, Rome defiles the sanctuary and introduces false worship, and the “restoration of true worship” implies embracing Adventist doctrines—including Adventism’s requirement to worship on the seventh day and to understand the Adventist explanation of Jesus’ supposed ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

One may wonder how this supposed Romish desecration of the sanctuary can possibly be cleansed. The Adventist answer to that question is revealed by a glaring error in interpreting Daniel 8:13.

The pivotal text

In order to support their unique doctrine of an investigative judgment, Adventists wrongly interpret Daniel 8:13, disconnecting it from its context in the same way William Miller did. In order to see clearly how Adventist interpretation is skewed, let us look at the whole passage of Daniel 8:9–14. We will use the KJV since that version is the one that most clearly supports the Adventist argument, and we highlight the pivotal text, verse 13:

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant [land]. 10 And it waxed great, [even] to the host of heaven; and it cast down [some] of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified [himself] even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily [sacrifice] was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given [him] against the daily [sacrifice] by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. 13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain [saint] which spake, How long [shall be] the vision [concerning] the daily [sacrifice], and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Contextually, if Daniel 8:13 refers to the destructions of the sanctuary and its service described in 8:9–12, then 8:14 must


Context, of course, demands that the little horn of verses 9–10 is the same power as the little horn of verses 11–12, but Adventism makes them different.

also refer to that same sanctuary which was defiled by the little horn in verses 9–12. In other words, given the context of the passage, Daniel 8:14 defines the time when the sanctuary, defiled by the little horn, would be cleansed.

On the other hand, Adventism disconnects verse 13 from verses 9–12. It interprets verses 13 and 14 as a discreet unit that has nothing to do with the details of verses 9–12. Adventist interpretation, therefore, insists that the sanctuary and the cleansing mentioned in 8:14 have no relationship at all with the little horn of Daniel 8:9–12 and the supposed desecrations done by pagan and papal Rome.

It is easy to see that the Adventist interpretation is utter confusion. The context and the language of the passage are clear: Daniel 8:9–14 is a complete unit of thought. Grammar dictates that the sanctuary that will be cleansed (v. 14) is the same sanctuary that was desecrated by the little horn named in verse 9. In fact, all of the desecrations described in 9–12 are done by the same little horn and not by two different ones that merged and morphed.

Finally, if the defiling of the sanctuary described in 8:9–12 has no relationship to the cleansing from defilement promised in 8:14, then the discussion of 8:9–12 has no purpose but is irrelevant to the passage. Because these verses actually exist together, however, we have to read them as components of the same narrative. In context, verses 9–14 convey a prophecy, and each verse builds upon the previous one. They cannot be separated from each other; the rules of grammar



clearly dictate that 8:14 describes the cleansing of the sanctuary defiled by one single power as detailed in verses 9–12.

False Doctrinal Foundation

Finally, after misinterpreting the little horn of Daniel 8:9–12 and giving it two separate identities, and after dissecting the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 from the defiled sanctuary of Daniel 8:9–12, Seventh-day Adventists make their most horrifying declaration of all. At first glance the blasphemy is almost hidden: they proudly proclaim that Jesus Christ is the wonderful hero who first entered the heavenly Most Holy Place in 1844 to begin cleaning the heavenly sanctuary. They ignore the fact that this supposed 1844 intervention contradicts the biblical statements that Jesus ascended straight to His Father and sat down (Heb. 6:20; 10:11–14).

Upon a second glance, it is clear that this Adventist interpretation is not only theologically heretical, but it is also contextually and grammatically impossible. In fact, the hermeneutical twisting Adventists perform in order to get from 8:9–12 to 8:14 is incredible, bizarre, and totally illogical.

For the sake of argument, let us assume the Adventist interpretation of the little horn is correct. In other words, suppose that it does start out as pagan Rome and merges into papal Rome, destroying first the temple in Jerusalem and then defiling true worship with the papal mass, Sunday worship, and the confessional while persecuting believers on earth. Even if this scenario were true, the cleansing and the sanctuary in verse 14 would still have to be related to the defilements of verses 9–12.

Instead, however, Adventists make a disorienting “about face”, a 180-degree turn, and they blame the defilement of the sanctuary that needs to be cleansed on the atoned sins of believers! The Adventists’ prophetess Ellen White explains this blasphemy in her book *The Great Controversy* in chapter 23, “What Is The Sanctuary?”, on pages 417–421.


Significantly, in the 719 pages of *The Great Controversy* (TGC), Ellen White refers to the “papal little horn” of Daniel 7:25 four times, but never does she mention the little horn of Daniel 8:9–13 defiling the sanctuary that must be cleansed as stated in Daniel 8:14. The prophetess who describes this entire Adventist sanctuary doctrine never connects the central proof text, Daniel 8:14, with the verses preceding it.



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Also significantly, Daniel 8:15–23 explains the vision of verses 9–14, and the angel speaking to Daniel identifies the little horn in this chapter as arising from Greece, not from Rome. By saying the little horn of Daniel 8:9–12 is Rome, Adventism has ignored the context of the rest of the chapter.

Investigative judgment destroyed



We begin to understand Adventist theology by asking one simple question—a question which destroys Adventist logic, the investigative judgment, and the reason for the existence of Seventh-day Adventism: “Who brought the atoned sins of believers into the heavenly sanctuary to defile it?”


According to Adventist doctrine, when a person “accepts Jesus”, all his past sins are transferred by Jesus’ blood to the heavenly sanctuary where they remain on “the books of record”. In her book *The Great Controversy* Ellen White explains: “The “penitent believers” are considered pardoned, but their sins are not blotted out. There has to be a future atonement for the final destruction of their sins. Accordingly, Adventism says, Jesus began that “work of atonement for the removal of sins from the sanctuary” in 1844 when He began His investigation into the records of those who profess faith.

Those whom the records reveal have repented of their sin and have faith in Christ “are entitled to the benefits of His atonement.” Only after Jesus finishes this investigative work can He remove those sins from the heavenly sanctuary by placing them on Satan. Ellen White states that Satan is the scapegoat “who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty” (TGC pp. 480–481).

Adventism teaches a uniquely cultic doctrine: the atonement applied to one’s sins when he accepts Christ is not sufficient, and a second act of atonement is required. The first phase of atonement gets one’s sins transferred by means of Jesus’ blood into heaven where they defile the heavenly sanctuary. The second phase of atonement occurs at the end of Jesus’ investigative judgment when He finally transfers those sins from the sanctuary onto Satan who carries them into the lake of fire. Thus heaven is finally cleansed, and believers are finally fully forgiven.

The conclusion is inescapable: those sins that defile heaven are actually placed in heaven by Jesus’ blood! In fact, Adventist doctrine teaches the impossible contradiction that Jesus’ blood defiles the sanctuary and that it is also a component in its cleansing.

Like it or not, admit it or not, Seventh-day Adventist teaching portrays Jesus Christ as the worst of their three defilers of the sanctuary. First, they teach that pagan Rome defiled the earthly sanctuary and then that papal Rome defiled true worship with its false worship. Finally, they say Jesus entered heaven in 1844 to establish true worship (according to Adventism), to restore the law, and to finish His atonement and cleanse the defiled sanctuary—





which He defiled by transferring people’s sins there by means of His blood!

The fact is, however, that sacrificial blood never defiles, not in the old covenant nor in the new covenant. Blood sprinkled in the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement was a “receipt” or “proof of purchase” that the nation’s sins had been atoned. In the new covenant, Jesus’ blood is the sufficient payment for all human sin, and believers’ sins are blotted out by Jesus’ blood the moment they believe.

Blood never transfers sins. It is never a vehicle of defilement. Blood always cleanses, and Jesus’ blood shed once for all cleanses unequivocally every sin of every person who places his trust in Him.

The mechanism of the investigative judgment, however, reveals the dark core of Adventist theology. It sounds clever to equate Jesus’ heavenly ministry with the earthly blood-sprinkling of the levitical Day of Atonement, but the comparison is false. Jesus completed the Day of Atonement sacrifice and atonement on the cross on Calvary. To say He transfers sins from believers into heaven where they defile the presence of God is utter blasphemy. Jesus does not participate in any way with defiling heaven, yet Adventist theology says He does. Ironically, the investigative judgment of Seventh-day Adventism—its only unique doctrine—is actually its greatest error. This error was established by their completely separating Daniel 8:14 from its context.

While most Adventists know that their doctrines teach that the atoned sins of the saved defile the heavenly sanctuary, and while they also know those sins supposedly were carried into heaven by Jesus’ blood, they have ignored the obvious question: who actually defiled heaven? According to Adventist theology, the One they present as the hero cleansing the sanctuary is also the villain who defiled it!

The horror of facing fully the implications of teaching that Jesus’ blood in any way transfers sin or defilement is shocking.

This teaching [that Jesus’ blood transfers sin or defilement] is anti-Christ, and Adventism carries this detail at the heart of its doctrine of salvation.

This teaching is anti-Christ, and Adventism carries this detail at the heart of its doctrine of salvation. Nevertheless, Adventist evangelists continue to hide the fact that the one who defiles heaven necessitating the cleansing of Daniel 8:14 does a worse thing even than the terrible deeds they claim pagan and papal Rome did in verses 9–12. In fact, the Jesus Adventism teaches is a different Jesus from the one revealed in Scripture.

I urge all Seventh-day Adventists to read carefully every word of chapter 23 in *The Great Controversy*, “What Is The Sanctuary?”, pages 417–421. The reality of how the sanctuary doctrine “works” is clearly revealed.

Then, after seeing what Ellen White has established as Adventist “truth”, I urge all Seventh-day Adventists to read carefully every word of the book of Hebrews. The Bible itself reveals the fallacy of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine.

The truth is, Jesus’ blood never defiles; it always cleanses. It is impossible for Jesus to participate in defilement or desecration in any sense! †

The Great Controversy references are taken from vol. 5, Conflict of the Ages Series, copyright 1950.

Resources for further study on the sanctuary and investigative judgment doctrines

At first glance the Adventist teachings about Jesus’ high priestly ministry and the cleansing of the sanctuary seem unique, even heterodoxical, but their true nature is revealed when one compares their details with the specific words of Scripture.

Because these details of Adventist doctrine are not well-understood by most Adventists, we are suggesting resources for further study on these topics. The details determine the true nature of the doctrines.

Books

Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists by Dale Ratzlaff
Exposing Seventh-day Adventism by Russell Kelly

Articles

“Who Is Your Scapegoat?” by Chris Badenhorst

“Does Blood Defile the Tabernacle?” by Russell Kelly
 “Does the I.J. Answer the Question in Daniel 8:13?” by Russell Kelly
 “Antiochus Epiphanes: Is He the Little Horn?” by Dale Ratzlaff
 “How *The Clear Word* Distorts Atonement” by Steve Pitcher
 “What Is Seventh-day Adventism?” by Colleen Tinker
 “Discovering the Adventist Jesus” by Colleen Tinker

Videos

“What Happened To the Law?” by Colleen Tinker
 “Three Adventist Doctrines that Compromise the Gospel” by Dale Ratzlaff
 “Daniel and His Book: God’s Key For the Future” by Gary Inrig
 “Daniel and His Book: Curious Interpretations” by Gary Inrig

These resources are linked here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybnak5eg>

ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #24

CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #24

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle that the Lord set up and not humans. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. At His ascension, He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent.

COMMENTARY ON THIS STATEMENT

The very existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hangs on the Sanctuary/Investigative Judgment doctrine. In fact, this Fundamental Belief articulates the only doctrine that is unique to Adventism. Without this doctrine, the existence of the Adventist church is called into question.

One short article can't hope to address a question that is the subject of entire books, but this column will examine the specific claims made within the official belief statement.

"In [the heavenly sanctuary] Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross." This is a subtle reinterpretation of what is actually described in Scripture. "(Jesus) has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:27 ESV). This concept of "making available the benefits of His atoning sacrifice" is a fabricated concept that is not found in Scripture. Instead, it negates the actual meaning of the "once for all" sacrifice described in Hebrews.

The Fundamental Belief continues with the claim that "At His ascension, [Jesus]... began His intercessory ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary." Hebrews 7:27 showed that Jesus had no need to perform this daily ministry. In Hebrews 9 we are told, "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are

copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:24–27 ESV). Scripture plainly describes Christ going directly to the presence of God (that is, the Most Holy Place) in the same way that the earthly high priest entered the Most Holy Place every year. Jesus made atonement once for all and entered the presence of God when He ascended; the earthly high priests made ritual atonement once a year by taking animal blood into the presence of God in the Most Holy Place.

The descriptions of Christ's heavenly ministry in Hebrews do not support the "dual compartment ministry" Adventists claim that Jesus performs in Heaven. They insist He only entered the outer Holy Place when He ascended but entered the presence of God in the Most Holy Place in 1844. Instead, Christ made a once-for-all sacrifice that fulfilled all of the daily and annual ceremonies and sat down at the right hand of God. Again—and I can't stress this fact enough—in the imagery of the Temple, God's presence is specifically housed in the Most Holy Place. Jesus' being seated at the right hand of God requires His being in the Most Holy Place.

There are a number of problems with the whole concept of a 2300-day prophecy ending in 1844. Adventists use Daniel 8:14 as the central passage to support this "sanctuary doctrine", but their use of this text has many hermeneutical problems, including:

The Judgment

... have us that there will be a
... appointed a day, in the which he
... Acts 17:30, 31.
... till future in Paul's day?
... of righteousness, temperance,
... Felix trembled." Acts 24:
... For whom has a book of remembrance been
... written?
... "Then thou that feared the Lord...



This is an illustration in one of Adventism's central doctrinal teaching books, *Bible Readings for the Home*, showing Jesus in the "heavenly sanctuary".

- A questionable, and certainly inconsistent, application of the "year-day principle". Adventist studies make strong claims about this "principle", yet that concept is only applied to a handful of time periods mentioned in prophecy;
- A question as to whether evening-morning means the same thing as "days" when referencing prophecy, since this phrasing is unique in Daniel 8:14;
- a fairly large assumption that Daniel 9:23-27 is referencing Daniel 8:13-14;
- An even larger assumption that the 70 weeks must be "cut-off" from a longer prophetic time period.

The Fundamental Belief claims that at the end of the 2300-year prophecy, in 1844, the heavenly sanctuary starts to be cleansed ("Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed", Dan. 8:14 KJV). However, Hebrews describes this cleansing as having already been completed in the first century: "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12, making reference back to Heb. 9:7 and the High Priest's yearly Day of Atonement sacrifice and entrance to the Most Holy Place).

The writers of Scripture explained that the typology of the Old Testament sanctuary was already fulfilled in the first century, when Jesus died, rose, and ascended to the Father's right hand. Adventism's claim that Jesus didn't finish fulfilling the typology until 18 centuries later requires them to deny Scripture!

The really big problem with the Fundamental Belief statement, however, is the reference to the investigative judgment. The belief statement claims that in 1844, Jesus began a stage of His heavenly ministry "which was typified by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. It is a work of investigative judgment". However, the high priest in the earthly sanctuary didn't perform any "investigative judgment" in the Most Holy Place. This statement is designed to deceive. It claims as fact a completely invented scenario of a judgment of believers, and Adventism builds its doctrine on top of this faulty premise.

The entire concept of an investigative judgment denies the gospel. What is being investigated? Are believers being investigated

to determine if they should be deemed worthy of eternal life? The answer to that question is simple. It is a resounding "No!" Fortunately, we don't have to rely on our righteousness. We are credited with the righteousness of Christ. We aren't worthy of being saved, but He is. The only thing that matters is that our Savior has already been deemed worthy to save us.

The most elusive answer within Seventh-day Adventism may very well be, "What is being investigated in the investigative judgment?" Since, in Seventh-day Adventist theology, the confusing investigative judgment is the doorway to eternal life, every Adventist should demand a clear answer to the question, "What must I do in order to be saved?" If the Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot clearly explain how a person can pass the investigative judgment, how can any person who believes in the doctrines of the Adventist Church know how they can be saved?

Scripture promises believers in Christ that we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee from God promising us eternal life; however, the investigative judgment denies that we can have such a guarantee.

Adventists must answer this question: will you believe the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist organization, or will you believe the eternal, inerrant word of God?

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 ESV).

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (2 Cor. 1:21-22 ESV). †

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Jesus is not an Old Covenant Priest

COLLEEN TINKER

I grew up in Adventism picturing Jesus busily working in the heavenly sanctuary. With the help of the illustrations in my Adventist textbooks, storybooks, and other Adventist publications, I had a clear mental image of Him dressed like Aaron the high priest. He wore a breastplate with 12 stones; He had a *Urim* and a *Thummim* on His breastplate, and he had a blue linen ephod over a white garment and a white linen cap with a golden crown having the words “Holy To The Lord” engraved on it.

The Adventist high priestly Jesus was always standing in front of the golden cherubim bowing over the mercy seat on top of the golden altar in which (we were told) the Ten Commandment tablets lay, and this Jesus was usually pictured mediating the prayers of the obedient Adventists huddled in earnest petition on the dark earth below. This Jesus was looking for repentance from every single sin the faithful overcomers had committed so He could finally apply His blood and forgive them permanently.

In fact, this Aaron-like priest was at the center of the Adventist “sanctuary doctrine”. He had gone into the heavenly Most Holy Place where He began His “mediation” in the presence of the ark of God and the mercy seat in 1844. It was important for Him to be dressed like Aaron, because He was the heavenly “anti-type” of the earthly high priests. Dressing Him like Aaron would help us understand that He was in heaven doing what Aaron and his descendants had done on the Day of Atonement, only He was “applying His blood” instead of the blood of animals.

Where did this idea come from?

Readers who have never been Adventist might well wonder how Adventists ever got such beliefs, and the answer would be simple: Ellen White. In the early days after the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, when Jesus did not return as William Miller had predicted, a persistent group of early adventists who did not repent

of their date-setting coalesced and founded a new movement. Led by Joseph Bates, James White, and James’s young wife Ellen G. Harmon White, a prophetess, these disappointed but determined early adventists hammered out a set of doctrines for their fledgling church which eventually organized and adopted the name Seventh-day Adventists.

Adventism depends upon Ellen White’s interpretation of Scripture. Even though today many say they do not read her nor believe her, the fact remains: Adventist doctrine and the Adventist world view is shaped entirely on the basis of Ellen White’s visions, commentary, and inspiration.

The Adventist history book used for years at the Adventist seminary at Andrews University quotes Ellen White in this excerpt explaining how the early Adventists arrived at their doctrinal positions:

...they were hammered out as the result of Bible study, discussion, and prayer. Much of the time, Ellen White testified, she could not understand the texts under discussion and the issues involved. Yet she later remembered that when the brethren who were studying, “came to the point...where they said, ‘We can do nothing more’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively.” Because the participants “knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters,...they ac-



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cepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given” (R.W. Schwartz, *Lightbearers To the Remnant*, Department of Education, General Conference of SDA, 1979, p. 68–69).

The Adventist dependence upon Ellen White, however, opposes Scripture’s clear declaration about itself:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Heb. 4:12–13).

As we look at the Adventist interpretation of Jesus and His high priestly work, it is crucial that we remember Adventism’s own declaration of how they developed their doctrines. They tell converts and the public that all of their doctrines are based on Scripture alone, yet internally they acknowledge and teach that their doctrines derived from Ellen White’s visions. They admit that the founders and Ellen White herself did not understand Scripture and had to have outside visions in order to come up with their doctrines.

Ellen White’s law

Because of Ellen White, Adventism teaches that the law is the revelation of the character of God and the standard of righteousness by which the saved will be measured.

In the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* Ellen White is quoted:

The great standard of righteousness presented in the Old Testament is not lowered in the New. It is not the work of the Gospel to weaken the claims of God’s holy law, but to bring men up where they can keep its precepts.

The faith in Christ which saves the soul is not what it is represented by many. “Believe, Believe,” is their cry; “only believe in Christ and you will be saved. It is all you have to do.” While true faith trusts wholly in Christ for salvation, it will lead to perfect conformity to the law of God.

The enemy has ever labored to disconnect the law and the gospel. They go hand and hand.

We honor both the Father and the Son when we talk about the law. The Father gave us the law, and the Son died to magnify it and make it honorable (*SDA Bible Commentary*, book 6, Ellen G. White’s Comments section, p. 1072–1073, on Rom. 3:24–28).

As an Adventist, I believed that the law was eternal, that Jesus lived to demonstrate how we could keep the law as He did, and that He died to uphold and establish the law as a continuing requirement for all people and a binding measure of righteousness for Christians. Therefore, because the law was eternal, all people were required to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

Thus Jesus, as the high priest in heaven, was waiting for true believers to perfect their law-keeping, especially their honoring of the

seventh-day Sabbath, and He was waiting for every prayer of repentance for every transgression against the law that professed believers committed. This heavenly investigative judgment of believers' law-keeping and punctilious repentance was the essence of what we as Adventists called "the sanctuary doctrine".

The law was changed

Imagine our shock one evening in the mid-1990s when, as we were discovering the gospel and realizing Adventism was not based on the Bible alone, our older son Roy came out of his bedroom and announced to us: "Hey! Hebrews 7:12: 'For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.'"

Richard and I grabbed our Bibles and looked for ourselves. Sure enough; right there in Scripture was the declaration that the priesthood of Jesus was not the same as the levitical priesthood. Jesus was of the order of Melchizedek, not of Levi, and with a change in the priesthood, the law also had to change. What did that mean?

Hebrews 7:11 made this reality even more clear:

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?

This text reveals three important things. First, there are two kinds of God-appointed priesthoods in the Bible: one in the levitical order, and the other in the order of Melchizedek. Second, these two priesthoods administer different laws. Finally, Israel received their law on the basis of the levitical priesthood.

In other words, in the Bible, "law" is formulated on the basis of the priesthood that administers it. One order of priesthood cannot administer a law based on a different order of priesthood. Therefore, if Jesus is not in the order of Aaron and the levitical priesthood, then the law of Christ cannot be the same law that involved a levitical priesthood. It has to be a different law!

Who was Melchizedek?

What does it mean that Jesus is not a priest according to the order of Levi but rather of Melchizedek? If He is our high priest in heaven—and the book of Hebrews is clear that He is—how are we to understand that fact? As Adventists, the only high priest we knew wore a breastplate, a blue linen ephod, had a *Urim* and a *Thummim*, and stood in front of the heavenly ark of the covenant mediating the incense of Adventists' prayers!

In order to understand what it means that Jesus is a Melchizedek priest instead of a levitical priest, we need to know what the Bible tells us about Melchizedek.

There are three places in Scripture where Melchizedek is mentioned. The first is Genesis 14, and this passage gives us the brief story of this mysterious but real figure. There was an ancient war of the kings in the region near the Dead Sea. In the course of the battle, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into tar pits, and the surviving warriors fled—but not before taking all the goods and food supplies of Sodom and Gomorrah. They also took Lot, Abraham's nephew, who was living in Sodom.

Abraham heard that Lot had been captured, and he pursued his captors with his own trained army of 318 men. Abraham and his men defeated those kings, retrieved Lot, the food supplies, and all the captured women and brought them back.

Genesis 14:18–20 then introduces Melchizedek:

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

He gave him a tenth of all.

We learn several important facts about Melchizedek in this passage. First, he was a king and he was also a priest. His royal rule was over Salem—the same city that later became known as Jerusalem. In his role as priest he served the Most High God. Importantly, Melchizedek's priesthood predated the law. Levi had not yet been born; Israel was not yet a nation.

Also importantly, under the levitical law, kings and priests could never be the same person. Kings came from the tribe of Judah; priests came from the tribe of Levi. No Israelite could hold a dual office because the offices were designated by tribe. Melchizedek, however, predated the law and was not ruled by it.

Another thing we learn is that Melchizedek fed Abraham bread and wine, refreshing him after his slaughter of the kings. Melchizedek also blessed Abraham, and Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek.

In other words, Abraham recognized Melchizedek's God-given authority over him. He honored him as a king, but even more significantly, he honored him as a priest of God, paying him tithe of his war spoils and receiving a blessing from him.

The second place we hear of Melchizedek is from David in Psalm 110:4. Psalm 110 is a Messianic psalm written by David, the one to whom God covenanted that a descendant of his would always sit on the throne. In fact, the Messiah was designated throughout Old Testament prophecies as the Son of David.

In verse 4 of Psalm 110 David writes:

The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Clearly David was writing prophecy about someone greater than himself. He was writing about someone who would be a priest "forever", not just for a human lifetime. He would be "forever", and his priesthood would be according to the order of Melchizedek.

Because of what we know from Genesis 14, we can conclude certain things about this prophesied "forever" priesthood. It would not be like the priesthood of those levitical priests who served in the tabernacle at the time of David. Those priests served under the law and received their instructions for service from the law. Every ritual, sacrifice, and function of the priesthood was determined by the law. This coming priest, however, like Melchizedek, would not be under the law. Melchizedek's priesthood was outside the law and encompassed interceding for God, blessing those who came to him, providing food for them, and receiving offerings. Moreover, Melchizedek's priesthood allowed for him to hold the office of king as well as of priest.

David, who may not have fully understood the prophecy he was writing as the Holy Spirit inspired him, spoke of One to come who would be a priest different from those David knew. This coming one would be a priest like the great priest in Genesis: he would serve the Most High God with authority directly from God, unmediated by a law.

Melchizedek in Hebrews

The author of Hebrews picks up the subject of Melchizedek and explains his significance more deeply. In fact, Hebrews 7:1–10 unpacks how this ancient figure foreshadowed Jesus and shows how David’s prophecy is fulfilled in Christ. In this passage we learn that Melchizedek’s name means “King of righteousness”. Moreover, we learn that his royal title, King of Salem, actually means King of Peace.

The writer of Hebrews goes even further and compares the fact that the Bible is silent about the personal details of Melchizedek with the miraculous lineage of Jesus. He says of Melchizedek, “Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually” (v. 3).

Moreover, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. The author of Hebrews makes a point to explain that blessings are given by the greater to the lesser; the person with more authority and greatness blesses the person with less. In fact, the author explicitly points out that Abraham, the one to whom God gave the promises of seed, land, and blessing and through whom the whole earth would be blessed—this great Abraham was blessed by someone even greater: Melchizedek.

In fact, Abraham was the greatest of the patriarchs. He was the one who was blessed with God’s promises and through whom all God’s people are named! In Jewish history, no one except the Lord Jesus Himself—and Melchizedek—is greater than Abraham.

Furthermore, the author of Hebrews explains that Melchizedek was greater than Levi, the father of the priestly tribe; in effect, Levi himself paid tithe to Melchizedek because Levi was still in the loins of his great-grandfather Abraham. By Abraham’s paying tithe to Melchizedek, Abraham demonstrated that he and all his descendants were less than this ancient priest-king who met him after war.

Importantly, Hebrews also discloses that Melchizedek was not from the priestly tribe, yet he performed the roles of a priest to Abraham who had been given divine promises!

What about Levitical high priests?

Since the author of Hebrews goes on to contrast the order of Melchizedek as superior to the order of Levi, let’s review what we know about levitical high priests and their duties. First, as both the Old Testament and Hebrews 7 explain, levitical high priests were appointed by law. They received their offices by the legally established rules of inheritance; they had to be descended from the tribe of Levi, and they had to be descended from specific sons of Aaron in order to qualify as high priests.

Levitical high priests had to offer sacrifices for themselves as well as for the people. In other words, they had no advantage the

**Therefore, if Jesus is not
in the order of Aaron and
the levitical priesthood,
then the law of Christ
cannot be the same law
that involved a levitical
priesthood. It has to be a
different law!**

people did not have in terms of forgiveness or innocence. They had to offer sacrifices for their own sins. Moreover, they were weak, impermanent, and they died. They held the office of high priest for only a few short years.

Finally, their sacrifices only cleansed ritually; they never removed sin. They only offered animal sacrifices, and while God granted ritual cleansing for those sacrifices, they never made the people truly clean. They could not remove sin.

Jesus: a Melchizedek high priest

Now that we have seen the significance and symbolism of the ancient man Melchizedek and also the characteristics of the levitical priests, we can understand why the Lord used Melchizedek as the type of Jesus and introduced him to Israel both in Genesis and in the Psalms to prepare His people for the coming reality: the Messiah, the Lord Jesus!

Jesus had no beginning and no ending. Just as Hebrews 7 says that Melchizedek had no genealogy and remained a figure whose beginning and ending were utterly obscure, so the Lord Jesus actually has no beginning and no end. Further, like Melchizedek, Jesus is greater than both Abraham and Levi.

Also like Melchizedek, Jesus did not descend from the priestly tribe of Levi. In other words, he was not a legal priest. Under the law He would have been disqualified as a priest. Moreover, Jesus



A PORTION OF AN ILLUSTRATION BY CLYDE PROVONSHA, ARTIST © 1963 SO LUTHERAN PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION, © 1967 PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION FAIR USE, FAIR DEALING.

This illustration appeared in the 1962 edition of *Bible Readings For the Home* published by Pacific Press Publishing Association, an Adventist denominationally owned publisher. Adventist artist Clyde Provonsha painted the original picture which showed this priest above a bank of clouds separating him from a man praying earnestly at his bedside.

This scenario has been replicated many times by many artists over the decades of Adventism. Ellen White wrote that Jesus answers the prayers of law-keeping Adventists who believe that Jesus began His work of investigation and “applying His blood” in 1844.

Jesus is depicted with an Aaronic high priestly garment interceding before the ark of the covenant in heaven.

was from the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe. As Hebrews 7:13 says, no one from the tribe of Judah ever “officiated at the altar”. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is both a king (legally and physically, according to the law’s designation of the tribe of Judah and according to God’s promise to David) and a priest—but His priesthood is NOT according to the law, as Melchizedek’s was not. Jesus’s priesthood is, as the author of Hebrews states in 7:16, not on the “basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.”

Unlike the weak and impermanent levitical priests who cannot maintain their priesthood because of death, Jesus is a priest on the basis of a life that is indestructible. He has no ending!

Hebrews 7:20–21 explains that Jesus’ priesthood was appointed by an oath of God. He is, therefore, a king by descent and a priest by God’s oath. His priesthood has no end; like the foreshadowing of the mysterious Melchizedek, his priesthood is perpetual, and just as Melchizedek blessed Abraham and his unborn descendants, Jesus also blesses the descendants of Abraham.

The truth about the law and Jesus

In order to understand the limitations of the levitical priesthood, we must understand that the entire law was only a shadow of reality, “not the very form of things”, as Hebrews 10:1 states. According to Hebrews 10, the law made nothing perfect. It demanded

animal sacrifices which could never take away sins, and they were offered by mortal priests who had no enduring office (Heb. 7). Moreover, the law had rituals and sabbaths which were only shadows of the reality found in Christ (Col. 2:16–17).

The law was a conditional covenant which depended on two-way promises between God and the nation of Israel. It was flawed, however, because those it governed (the Israelites) as well as those who mediated the terms of the covenant (the priests) were flawed sinners (see Heb. 8:7–13). As sinners, the Israelites could not make eternal promises which could not be broken.

The law, which contained all the details for Israel’s civil, moral, and religious life and unique identity, was given to the Israelites on the basis of the levitical priesthood, as 7:11 explicitly states. Therefore, the priests oversaw the law’s requirements and mediated ritual cleansing for sinful Israel—rites and ceremonies which were mere shadows of the good things to come.

In other words, since the priests were weak, flawed, and impermanent, since the sacrifices provided ritual cleansing but could not remove sin, this law of shadows had priests who were shadows who offered sacrifices that were shadows—all of which foreshadowed the “good things to come” that were realized in the person of Christ.

Jesus, however, is better than the law. He is the eternal, sinless, righteous High Priest and cannot mediate a law of shadows—because He is not a shadow. He is the Reality!

Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant. He is an eternal High Priest. He is the perfect Sacrifice sufficient for all past, present, and future sins!

Adventist art: perceptions imprinted with pictures

As Adventists, many of us felt confused about the “sanctuary service” as Adventists. We couldn’t have explained what it was, what Jesus was supposed to be doing, or what its purpose was. While these details matter under the surface, we are tempted to think they don’t really matter to us.

The reality, though, is that even though we didn’t necessarily understand the doctrine, without knowing it, we were deeply taught that Jesus is the wrong kind of priest.

Look at the picture on the previous page; what kind of priest is Jesus? Let’s observe his garments. He is wearing a breastplate with 12 stones. He has a gold, purple, scarlet, and blue ephod over a white linen robe. He has *Urim* and *Thummim* stones on the sides of the breastplate. He has onyx stones on his shoulders and a sash and a turban. He’s standing in front of a golden ark with cherubim on the sides. Jesus is pictured exactly as the levitical high priests are described in Exodus when they wear their full regalia.

Jesus in Adventist art is pictured as an Aaronic high priest wearing the garb Aaron and all his descendants wore to signify their holy calling on a daily basis. The Adventist Jesus, garbed in full levitical high priest regalia, stands in front of the ark of the covenant in heaven mediating the prayers of Adventist believers. In fact, Ellen White said Jesus answers those who believed Jesus began the investigative judgment in 1844 and had asked forgiveness of every sin and had kept the law.

Adventist art reflects Ellen White’s teaching that whenever true Adventist believers pray, Jesus mediates their prayers before the ark of God, and He answers them.

Priestly garments and the Day of Atonement

Where did Adventists get the idea that Christ was an Old Testament priest?

Ellen White had a vision showing Jesus dressed like a levitical high priest. Read her own words:

I was then shown what did take place in heaven as the prophetic periods ended in 1844. I saw that as the ministration of Jesus in the Holy place ended, and he closed the door of that apartment, a great darkness settled upon those who had heard, and had rejected the messages of Christ’s coming, and they lost sight of him. Jesus then clothed himself with precious garments. Around the bottom of his robe was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. He had suspended from his shoulders a breastplate of curious work. And as he moved, it glittered like diamonds, magnifying letters which looked like names written, or engraven upon the breastplate. After he was fully attired, with something upon his head which looked like a crown, angels surrounded him, and in a flaming chariot he passed within the second veil. I was then bid to take notice of the two apartments of the heavenly Sanctuary. The curtain, or door, was opened, and I was permitted to enter (*Spiritual Gifts*, v. 1, p 158, 159).

...they portray Jesus in
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This vision is exactly contrary to Scripture! Not only does Hebrews explain that Jesus is not a levitical priest, but Leviticus 16:3–4 reveals that the Old Testament high priests took off their official regalia when they entered the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. Ellen White describes Him putting on the breastplate and ephod before entering! (In addition, she also states that she herself entered the Most Holy Place.)

Leviticus shows that the Old Testament high priests were to dress in the most simple clothes because they were entering the presence of the holy God, bearing blood sacrifices for the sins of the nation.

They themselves were in danger of being killed if they did not properly cleanse and humble themselves before entering God’s presence. They were to wear the badges of their office before the nation because the people were to respect them as the ones who did the dangerous work of interceding with their holy God on their behalf. Before God, however, their marks of office were meaningless. They had to humble themselves in the presence of God as they mediated blood for the cleansing of the nation.

Moreover, when they completed their yearly work of atonement before the mercy seat, the high priests were to enter the tent of meeting and undress, leaving their holy linen garments there which they had put on to enter the presence of God, and they were to bathe before putting on their regular high priestly clothes. Only then would they offer up the final burnt offering for atonement for themselves and for the people. (See Lev. 16:23–24).

Think about it; we learned by pictures that the Lord Jesus, God the Son, is in heaven wearing a *Urim* and a *Thummim*—those mysterious stones the Israelite high priests wore in order to receive direction from God!

Interestingly, (and with thanks to Dale Ratzlaff for pointing out this parallel) in John's account of the resurrection, he tells of running with Peter to the tomb and arriving first. When he looked inside, he saw "the linen wrappings lying there" (Jn. 8:5). Just as the high priests left their linen clothes in the tent of meeting after presenting the atoning blood in the Most Holy Place, so the Lord Jesus, the perfect Sacrifice, left His linen wrappings behind when He had completed shedding His blood, dying for sin, and had risen to life! In His death and resurrection, Jesus had fulfilled the high priestly work of atonement for humanity, right down to leaving behind the linen cloths as did the high priests who left behind their holy linen garments after sprinkling the blood.

The fact that Adventist art shows Jesus ministering in heaven dressed in high priestly regalia reveals that they are only giving "lip service" to their statements that He fulfills the work of the levitical high priests. In Israel, the work of atonement was done once a year by a high priest divested of his official "glory". Adventism claims that "atonement" occurs in heaven during the investigative judgment as Jesus "applies His blood", yet they portray Jesus in non-atonement dress. Even their art reveals that their Jesus is not the mediator of eternal cleansing and atonement.

Adventism's Jesus is an old covenant priest

Seeing pictures of Jesus dressed as a levitical high priest in heaven probably feels familiar to most people reading this arti-

cle. This familiar reaction is intentional. Art teaches ideas without using words, and we often form our ideas of reality by seeing it illustrated.

Adventist art intentionally imprints children and adults with the great controversy worldview. Because we have "seen" Jesus standing in His breastplate in heaven, even when we read passages like Hebrews 7 and learn that He is a high priest of a different order, we still picture Him dressed like Aaron. We mentally "see" Him doing the work of a glorified Old Testament high priest in a glorified heavenly sanctuary.

While the Bible is clear that Jesus is not a levitical priest, Adventism shows us that He is. Without words we learned from earliest childhood that Jesus is in heaven doing old covenant rituals as an old covenant priest. We know that Hebrews says He is different, of the order of Melchizedek; we interpret "different" as an old covenant variation. Adventism insists that Jesus is in heaven vindicating the law as a levitical high priest. We internalized the idea that the law continues in the new covenant because we learned through pictures that Jesus is a priest according to the old covenant law.

Think about it; we learned by pictures that the Lord Jesus, God the Son, is in heaven wearing a *Urim* and a *Thummim*—those mysterious stones the Israelite high priests wore in order to receive direction from God! The implication of this picture is that Jesus is less than God, that He needs direction from God as Aaron and his descendants did. The Adventist Jesus does not think the thoughts of God and do the works of God as His Father thinks and does His will, yet Jesus Himself said that whatever the Father does, He does (Jn. 5:19–20). He and the Father are one. Adventist art, however, shows Jesus as distinctly separate from and in need of external direction from the Father.

Words are not even needed to make these points go deeply into our worldview. The pictures of Jesus standing in old covenant high priestly garments in front of a golden ark of the covenant (in which, Ellen White says, the law resides in heaven) teaches us more firmly than mere words ever could. We see and "know" that the Adventist Jesus is an old covenant priest. Thus, when we read Hebrews, we picture what we have seen since childhood, and we interpret the words according to the deeply imprinted Adventist belief that Jesus is simply a glorified "Aaron".

What is real, and why does it matter?

Hebrews drives home reality: Jesus is a Priest of a different order. He is perfect and eternal, and He offered a perfect, sufficient sacrifice for sin. Jesus is greater than the Levites and greater than the patriarchs. He is greater than the temple (Mt. 12:6) and He is the fulfillment of the law (Mt. 5:17; Co 1:13; Heb. 10:1). Jesus is the Reality that makes the shadows obsolete. The author of Hebrews explicitly states this fact in 8:13: "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete."

Adventism intentionally imprints us with the idea that Jesus is a levitical priest in order to perpetuate the investigative judgment and the great controversy. If we picture Him in heaven dressed like Aaron, doing things like Aaron did, we can explain

his “sanctuary service”. If we think of Him as the anti-typical high priest doing the ongoing work of the supposed anti-typical “Day of Atonement” during the investigative judgment, we then have no trouble believing that His atonement was not completed at the cross.

If Jesus is a glorified old covenant priest working in heaven, then He is not a “seated” high priest at the right hand of God, as Hebrews 10:11–14 says He is. In fact, Hebrews 10:11–14 contrasts Jesus, who is seated at God’s right hand, with the old covenant priests who “stand daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”

The Adventist Jesus is a standing, continually-working priest who mirrors the earthly high priests as he performs Old Testament rituals glorified in heaven. In fact, the Adventist sanctuary doctrine teaches that He is in heaven deciding which of the believers’ sins are worthy of final forgiveness. This doctrine says that when people confess belief in Jesus, their sins are transferred by Jesus’ blood into the heavenly sanctuary where their record remains on the heavenly books. Thus the record of believers’ sins, which remain in heaven until the end of the investigative judgment, defile heaven.

Consider carefully; this belief clearly assigns Jesus’ blood the duty of transferring sins from the sinner to heaven. In other words, Jesus’ blood is the vehicle of heaven’s defilement.

Further, this sanctuary doctrine requires Jesus to “apply His blood” over and over as believers sin and confess, just as the levitical priests offered sacrifices over and over. This belief is heresy!

Hebrews 9:24–26 destroys this teaching:

For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Reality

The heresy we believed as Adventists teaches that in the investigative judgment, Jesus’ blood transfers believers’ sins from them to the heavenly sanctuary. Our sins, transferred to heaven, defile the sanctuary. Jesus then “applies His blood” to each confessed sin, changing it from “pardoned” to “forgiven”.

The truth we didn’t know, however, is that Jesus shed His blood once for all on a different kind of altar: on the cross at Calvary. When we trust Him His blood takes away our sin immediately and eternally, and we enter at that moment into eternal life (Jn. 5:24). The real Jesus is finished with His work and is not standing in Aaronic garb in front of a gold ark mediating and applying His blood. No! He is sitting at the Father’s right hand!

Jesus is a different kind of priest; He has offered one perfect sacrifice for sin—Himself. He has fulfilled every shadow of the levitical priesthood and its sacrifices, and He has made the law and its priesthood obsolete by being the reality it foreshadowed.

The Adventist Jesus is still fulfilling the Day of Atonement; He is still an old covenant priest serving the old covenant law.

The real Jesus’s work is completed; His sacrifice is sufficient, and His atoning work is done. He has sat down at the Father’s right hand; His blood never defiles and never carries sins into the presence of God. His blood always cleanses. As a priest according to the order of Melchizedek instead of Aaron, the real Jesus inaugurated and mediates a new covenant. He has fulfilled the law and made it obsolete, and because He is a new and different kind of priest, there has been a change of the law.

Now what?

Hebrews 10:28–31 gives us a severe warning about refusing to embrace the real Jesus and His powerful, completed atonement in His blood:

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Horribly, as Adventists we trampled the Son of God underfoot, denying His finished work of atonement and His identity as a completely different kind of Priest. We regarded His blood as an unclean thing, believing it defiled heaven by taking our sins there. Further, we insulted the Spirit of grace, believing we had to keep the law to prove we were safe to save.

Our God, however, is merciful and gracious. He shows us our sin, and He leads us to repentance. We who have been subjected to Adventism’s false Jesus must make a decision. Will we look back, like Lot’s wife, and long for the familiar deception we thought was true, or will we believe what the Bible says about God the Son and trust the real Jesus?

When we see the truth, we know we must repent for believing in a false Jesus and for regarding His blood as unclean. The real Jesus has paid the price of sin, has finished the atonement, and has sat down at the Father’s right hand. He is truth, and He is life. He is our High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, and in Him we are eternally secure! †

Note: The painting on the title page of this article is a modern piece done by Lars Justinen who does work for several Adventist publications including the Pacific Press and the Sabbath School “Quarterlies”. It demonstrates that even today Adventist artists depict Jesus clearly as an Old Testament high priest standing and working in heaven in front of the mercy seat. Their unique sanctuary doctrine requires Jesus still to be working on atonement for sin, unlike the seated High Priest whose work is finished as described in Hebrews 10:11–12.

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EXPOSED BY GOD

PHILLIP E. HARRIS, JR.



Putting on the robe of God

Both my robe and pajamas normally hang together on a door bracket in the bathroom. In the evening I reach behind the robe for the pajamas to put them on. As I awoke to begin this day, however, I couldn't find my robe to put it on. While not fully awake and still wearing my pajamas, I looked behind the robe for the robe because I was not "seeing" the robe. My dear wife said, "You should have some coffee first, and then maybe you'll find your robe." After looking everywhere I went back to the bathroom door and realized—my robe had been there all along!

Later, upon reflection, I realized that my morning, pre-coffee "blindness" to seeing my robe was similar to my looking for the word of God, yet looking for it everywhere except in the holy Bible and without being awakened and led in my search by the Holy Spirit.

Inspiration of the written word of God

The Apostle Paul, in his closing encouragement to Timothy, says this of Scripture:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 16–17).

The book of Jeremiah begins with; "The words of Jeremiah...." (Jer. 1:1). In verse 5, however, we learn where Jeremiah got his words. God says, "before you were born I consecrated you" to be a prophet. In other words, Jeremiah will only say what God puts in his mouth to say:

Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:9–10).

Scripture is composed of the words of God which He placed "in the mouths" of true prophets. Therefore, a prophet of God will only record the words as God gave them to him. Understand, therefore, that no true prophet of God will contradict any other prophet because they all receive inspiration from the same one and only holy God.

'S WORD



Holy Spirit-led study of the Bible leads to the understanding that anyone who says “thus says God” yet contradicts Scripture cannot be a prophet of God. Consequently, we must be discerning and test all extra-biblical writing and teaching against this holy canon of God.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 Jn. 4:1–4).

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—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6–9).

My journey out of the religion of my birth

When I was six I wanted to serve God and gave my life to the Lord Jesus Christ. At the age of twelve I made my commitment official by being baptized and joining the local Seventh-day Adventist church. I wanted to please God, but I was taught in my Adventist schooling that according to the investigative judgment/sanctuary doctrine, I must learn to live perfectly free of sin to be accepted into God’s kingdom. By the time I was sixteen, I heard a visiting preacher say in his sermon, “Of all of you sitting out there today, 90% of you are going to hell.” Already convinced that I was a defeated sinner with no hope of changing, that sermon was the final straw. I gave up and decided I might as well live the “life of a happy sinner”. Of course, I was never happy in my sin.

In the course of time a Christian couple shared the love of Christ through their own godly love for me with a message I had never heard before, the gospel message of Jesus’ death at Calvary for the completed, finished atonement for the sins of the world. Their living testimony soon led me to Romans 8:31–39, a passage which became life-changing for me after two years of struggle over what it clearly teaches:

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. 8:37–39).

I learned that I was either in the kingdom of God or I was not. There is no in-between. Furthermore, this passage teaches that if I am in God’s kingdom, I could know this fact now, not at some later time at the judgement seat of God. What Jesus promised the thief on the cross would also be true for me when I died; “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk. 23:43). I no longer had any fear of death.

Once I did surrender myself to this truth of Scripture and the indwelling love of Jesus Christ that was evident all around me, I realized I had to test the teachings of Seventh-day Adventism. I felt convicted that I either had to return to the Adventist church where I was still a member, or openly join in fellowship with the evangelical church I was now attending. Whichever way I chose to turn, I knew it must be founded upon the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit through searching the inspired written word of God.

The truth about the scapegoat

After petitioning God with a simple prayer, I was led to search out the meaning of the scapegoat mentioned in Scripture, because the work and identity of the scapegoat is a core teaching embedded in the investigative judgment/sanctuary doctrine of Adventism. I turned to and considered the details concerning the Day of Atonement recorded in Leviticus 23:26–32 and Numbers 29:7–11. Christians understand that the Day of Atonement was meant to

HOLY SPIRIT-LED STUDY OF THE BIBLE LEADS TO THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ANYONE WHO SAYS “THUS SAYS GOD” YET CONTRADICTS SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE A PROPHET OF GOD.

foreshadow Jesus’ death at Calvary to atone for the sins of the world. For the Hebrew people covered by the conditional Old Covenant, it was a “Sabbath day of rest” characterized by mourning, fasting, and repentance.

This is how the Day of Atonement was to begin:

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering (Lev. 16:1–5).

In the words of the LORD who instructed Moses, Aaron was to take two male goats from the congregation as “a sin offering”. The first and obvious point is that these two goats are one single offering. The attributes (requirements) were one and the same for both goats. In the Books of the Law of the Old Testament it states over and over, to the point of redundancy (about 45 times), that a sin offering must be “without blemish”. Concerning specifically the Passover lamb, read Exodus 12:5–11. Therefore, the two goats together, both being “without blemish”, could only be representative of the promised Messiah Jesus Christ and His death at Calvary.

This ceremony portrayed the full and completed atonement where Jesus shed His blood and then, in His death, descended into the grave and took our sins far away from us—as far as east is from the west (Ps. 103:12)—culminating in his victorious resurrection three days later. His descent into the grave, a place unknown to those still living, and His bearing sins far away from the camp of God’s people were represented by the scapegoat (Azazel). Being without blemish, the scapegoat without question represents the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, who is the holy Son of God who conquered death.

The fact that the scapegoat was without blemish and that he figuratively bore the sins of Israel away from them reveals that Ellen G. White wrote heresy by claiming the scapegoat to be

Satan and that our sins would be placed upon him. Our sins were placed on Jesus at Calvary. Jesus completed the atonement for the sins of the world at Calvary nearly two thousand years ago. In Adventism, Satan is an imposter who masquerades as our final sin bearer. In reality, he plays no part in our salvation because “the father of lies” is not without blemish.

From the moment I read those passages in Leviticus and Numbers, I knew I was no longer an Adventist in thought or deed. At the same time, I understood that there was much more to learn so I could grow in my relationship with and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Shortly after that time I was removed from official membership in the local Seventh-day Adventist church. In the fifty or so years that have transpired since then, I have grown in ways that are in graphic contrast to my youth as a fourth-generation Adventist.

Growing On the Solid Food of Scripture

I soon learned that when Jesus ascended into heaven, He sat down forever at the right hand of God the Father. There can be no holier place for Jesus the Son of God to be than at the right hand of the Father. Therefore nothing of significance could have happened in heaven on October 22, 1844:

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (Heb. 10:11–14).

At the time of Jesus’ death at Calvary, the curtain (KJV: veil) separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy was torn away. Therefore, even if a physical heavenly sanctuary existed, as claimed by Ellen G. White, there could have been no separation in the heavenly temple as the veil in the earthly copy had already been torn away:

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened (Mt. 27:51–52).

I have learned that the Sabbath day of rest as outlined in the Ten Commandments was the sign of the Mosaic Old Covenant and therefore could only apply to those bound by the conditions of that covenant. Furthermore, the keeping of the weekly Sabbath day of rest was not a day to worship God. Instead, worshipping God according to the laws of the Old Covenant could only be done at a certain place which, for the Jews, was at the temple in Jerusalem, John 4:1–26:

The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking

such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:19–24).

New Covenant believers covered by the shed blood of Jesus Christ worship God in spirit (our human spirit which has been born again through the Holy Spirit) and in truth. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the sign and guarantee of our inheritance in the New Covenant (Eph. 1:13–14)!

Our rest is in the finished work of Jesus’ blood shed at Calvary which points back to when Christ rested eternally from his work of creation (Gen. 2:1–2; Jn. 1:1–3). Today (an eternal on-going day of rest) Christians rest in Jesus (Heb. 4:3–7).

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest,’” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” And again in this passage he said, “They shall not enter my rest.” Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb. 4:3–7).

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30).

A new covenant

In the study of the book of Jeremiah I learned of the promised New Covenant. It would replace the old Mosaic covenant and would be given to the remnant of the Hebrew people (Jer. 31:31–34). What was also new was the knowledge that the gentiles would be grafted into that new covenant with God’s remnant people from Israel.

The gospel of Jesus Christ concerning His death, burial, and resurrection for eternal atonement of the sins of the world is outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1–5. There is no other gospel (Gal. 1:9). Therefore, when the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:25–34 responded in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ, he became eternally secure in the kingdom of God. However, we are still living in the flesh, and we do sin daily. To believe otherwise is an act of rebellion by calling God a liar:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 Jn. 1:8–10).

The Apostle Paul teaches that when I “walk by the Spirit”, I will not “gratify the desires of the flesh”. Then he contrasts my works of the flesh with being led by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16–26):

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do (Gal. 5:16–17).

Pagan health message

Furthermore, Ellen G. White was wrong to utilize Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 about God’s people being His temple in promotion of her pagan “health message” for at least two reasons. First, Paul’s message in this chapter addressed jealousy within the church (verse 3); his concern had nothing to do with what they were eating. The second reason her use of the 1 Corinthians passage is wrong is that Jesus told us what really defiles a person. Jesus said this to the Jewish people who were still under the Old Covenant law:

And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (Mk. 7:14–23).

Summary

There are so many details that God’s word has corrected in my thinking and theology over the years. I have learned to depend upon His word as the foundation of my faith and as the source of my knowledge of truth and reality. In short, the Bible is how I know the core truths that give me hope and security:

- The Bible and only the Bible is where we find the inspired Word of God.
- It is imperative that our faith be placed upon nothing other than the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ, for there is no other gospel by which man can be saved (Acts 4:12).
- Nothing can ever separate those whose sins are covered by the shed blood of Christ from the love of God the Father.
- Our sanctification over the “sins of the flesh” is the ongoing work of our Savior Jesus Christ through the leading of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:24–8:2). †

All Scripture quoted is from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

Phil Harris and his wife Janeane have been married 52 years and have three children and six grandchildren. Phil spent 25 years as a ship fitter, and now he and Janeane live quietly on two-and-a-half wooded acres on Puget Sound, Washington, where Phil gardens and writes for *Proclamation!* and for BibleStudiesforAdventists.com.



GALATIANS

KELSIE PETERSEN



The book of Galatians is a powerful antidote for Adventism and for all forms of legalism and pseudo-Christian systems of works-righteousness. I've heard so many people share that the reading and hearing of this short book has been the catalyst that propelled them out of more than one false religious system.

As I was rolling around the ideas for this article in my head, I had a few thoughts that might be interesting to you before we really dive in.

Did you know that at an average reading speed of 200 words per minute, you can read the entire book of Galatians in 15 minutes? It's an incredibly short book, but it's power-packed with so much truth that it's easy to see why it has become a favorite of so many of us who are recovering from the old covenant and discovering the new!

Have you ever read Galatians out loud? I tried once. I don't remember how far I got, but I do remember being struck by the passion and conviction with which Paul was speaking. It's impossible to read those words in a dull, lackluster tone. Paul's conviction and desperation to reach the Galatians with his message of "It is finished" fairly oozes out of every phrase. If you haven't tried to read this book out loud, you really should consider it. For me, even just the little bit I got through has added so much perspective as to how strongly Paul felt about both the topic and about his audience.

A simple internet search will yield several different outlines of the book of Galatians. An outline can be helpful before reading, during reading, and after, in order to keep the context of the book in mind. In fact, as I was reading through Galatians over the past few days, I jotted down my own informal outline of sorts.

From chapter 1:1–2:15, Paul establishes himself as someone who has authority and can be trusted.

Between chapters 2:16–5:12, he basically grabs the Galatians by the shoulders and gives them a good shake. He repeats his message right side up, upside down, forwards, backwards, diagonally, and inside-out: "The Law is GONE!" I had a private laugh picturing Paul taking a Galatian man by the shoulders and nearly shouting at him, "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth!?"

From chapter 5:13–6:10, Paul lays out for them what the life of the believer should (and should not) look like.

Finally, in the remaining verses of Chapter 6, he summarizes his message and signs off.

WHAT NOW?

As recovering legalists (if I may use that term), we feel the first five-and-a-half chapters most keenly, because they provide the prescription, the antidote, for what burdened us: the law. As I have moved farther from my exit point from Adventism, however—or perhaps just because of the circumstances of my life, I find myself turning more and more to the last main section of this book found in Chapters 5:13–6:10. Here I find the outline, the plan, for our new life as Christians: life by the Spirit.

As recovering law keepers, we sometimes miss the sense of security we got from living in the "box" which the law gave us. We had a "to do" list! We knew what the plan was.

The good news is—there is still a plan apart from the law! The bad news is—apart from the law, the plan is much shorter, with far fewer details.

Is there a list with this new plan, you ask? The answer is yes, but it's not a "to do" list at all. It's a "to BE" list. Even more shocking, we're not in charge of accomplishing the list anymore! (This news should cause my fellow "controllers" to feel pretty nervous!)

TO BE OR NOT TO...DO?

Reading through Galatians 5:13–6:10, I found a volley of things "to be" and things "not to do". Being the list-maker that I am, therefore, I compiled the following groups of behaviors and characteristics:

We are to be: free, led by the Spirit, a servant, loving, joyful, patient, good, faithful, gentle, self-controlled, humble, introspective, and self-examining.

We are not to: indulge the sinful nature, engage in sexual immorality, be involved in impurity, practice witchcraft, hate, cause discord, be jealous, have fits of rage, pursue selfish ambition, create dissensions and factions, envy, be drunk, participate in orgies, become conceited, or provoke others.

Of course there are a few things listed that we should do and things we should not be, but on the whole, the comparison of being vs. doing is quite profound to me. The whole message of the gospel is that we are freed from doing the works of the flesh. Instead, we are free to be the righteousness of God.

FOR DUMMIES*

*RECOVERING LEGALISTS

Of course, those who would put us back under the yoke of the law always want to know if our new freedom means that we are now free to do anything we feel the urge to do, because we are no longer under the law. Paul addresses this right at the start of this section, by saying,

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. BUT do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love.” (emphasis mine)

As I showed in the preceding lists, the difference between living in freedom by the Spirit is quite visibly different from living under the law, because the FRUIT of the Spirit is so vastly unlike the ACTS of the sinful nature (5:22, 5:19). I heard a quote once, and while I unfortunately can’t remember who said it, I do remember clearly what it said,

The believer does not have license to live in sin; rather he has liberty to live in freedom.

WORKING IT THROUGH

As someone still in recovery from a legalistic system (a “place” I will probably always be, to some degree), I find that certain terms I hear in sermons or in conversations with other Christians can really make my ears burn. Words such as “obedience,” “sanctification,” “law,” “truth,” and the like make me perk up and pay attention. I will admit that because of my experience growing up in Adventism as well as many unfortunate experiences within evangelical Christianity, I always cringe when I hear those words. My experience predisposes me to expect that I am about to get a “to-do” list and a guilt trip to go with it!

I have to work extra hard to wade through my own habitual responses to make sure that I am hearing the speaker rightly and to determine whether he or she is handling these concepts properly in light of the new covenant. I can do that internal filtering and analysis, but it requires more work for me than it would for many others.

Because of my knee-jerk reactions to behavior requirements, the idea of really putting teeth to this portion of Galatians to determine how these realities work in my personal life and how they should function in a local church body is a little daunting. I will admit that I am more than a little nervous to venture anywhere near anything that looks like a “to do” list!

Something has impacted me, however, as I have sat in this passage of Scripture over the last couple of weeks: these are not

“to do” lists. Yes, one is a “NOT to do” list, but when seen in its proper perspective of describing the believer living his or her life IN the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit being evident in one’s life, these acts of the flesh should be on the decline. When we do fall into sins such as these examples, we should feel the conflict with the Spirit and with God’s word. Galatians 5:17 addresses this fact:

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so you do not do what you want.”

If, however, we find ourselves desiring any of the acts of the flesh listed here or in other parts of the New Testament, it is time for a little self-reflection. Since the Spirit and the sinful nature are in conflict with each other, we can know that any desires we feel towards any of these things are NOT of the Spirit, and indulging them is sin.

This resisting of sinful desires is relatively straightforward when applied to our own personal lives, but Paul takes this sub-

Paul’s conviction and desperation to reach the Galatians with his message of “It is finished” fairly oozes out of every phrase.

ject a step further, calling us to hold each other accountable—and, honestly, to get right into other people’s business, provided they are fellow believers. Take a look at chapter 6, verse 1:

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.”

When read in the context of this section of Galatians, it is clear that we are not told to move indiscriminately through the

body, pointing out the sins of others. We are to be “spiritual”—that is, Spirit-focused—ourselves. We are to be gentle, and verse one even goes on to say that we need to watch ourselves in the process, lest we ourselves be tempted.

I have heard so many times, even just in the last few months, that we should not judge others. While it is true that we should not condemn others and cast judgment upon them, it is clear from a careful reading of Scripture that, as believers, we’re accountable to each other, and we are to warn each other away from sin. Warning a brother or sister away from sin does not come without heavy personal responsibility to check ourselves, and to guard our hearts from temptation, but I believe that Scripture makes it clear that this sort of accountability and candor is an important function of the body of Christ.

On the other side of this coin, if we are going to be obedient to Scripture in warning our brothers and sisters away from sin, we

also have to be humble and willing to be warned away from sin by perhaps those same brothers and sisters. If someone comes to us, in love, we also need to be humble and willing to prayerfully consider their warning, aligning everything with the Word of God. If what they say is true, we can humbly acknowledge it, repent of our sin, and be restored, as Paul says in Galatians 6:1!

It has become an increasingly unpopular to disagree with anyone about anything. Many Christians still maintain their disagreement with “the world” on hot button issues, such as abortion, but there seems also to be an increasing resistance to disagreeing with anyone who calls themselves a Christian, in the name of grace. On the other side, as with anything under the sun, this call to accountability can obviously be grossly misused, but that danger does not preclude accountability between believers. We are not islands. We need other believers around us to encourage us, to help bear our burdens, and to spur us on in the deepening of our faith, both internally and in its working out in our lives.

Our call is to live our life by the Spirit. Paul makes that mandate crystal clear throughout the entire book of Galatians, from his initial retelling of his story and his own calling, in his passionate plea to the Galatians not to allow themselves to be placed back under the yoke of slavery to the law, and finally with his appeal to them to be controlled by the Spirit and not to indulge the sinful nature and its acts. I love this verse in the middle of Paul’s closing comments to the churches in Galatia:

“May I never boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

We are called to be free, my friends! Let us walk in newness of life and serve one another in His great love! †

Kelsie Petersen lives near St. Paul, Alberta, Canada. She and her husband Aaron have three boys, Matthew, Tyler and Colby. Kelsie was born and raised in an Adventist home and received her elementary education degree from Canadian University College (formerly Canadian Union College, now Burman University). She is a life-long lover of music and spends her few spare moments at the piano with favorite praise songs and hymns.



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Pitcher's valuable service

Thanks again for some insightful articles via the magazine (Winter, 2017). As a concerned Christian, I have been very interested in the law and the believer for years. Mr. Pitcher has done a valuable service pointing out the many false Scripture paraphrases in *The Clear Word* by Mr. Blanco. I would not touch that "clear" version with a ten foot pole.

Mr. Pitcher also points out a mistake that many Protestant churches make (in my opinion)—that the law of God is in three parts: ceremonial, civil, and moral. I do not see this concept in Scripture, and this idea causes many besides the Adventists to be confused about the law of God.

My prayer is that the Lord would continue to lead you in discernment and truth in the ministry He has given you. We all need His leading.

OAKHURST, CA

No more hiding my doubts

As a retired former Seventh-day Adventist minister and teacher (38 years), I believe your last issue (Winter, 2017) was the best. Carel Stevenson, Richard Tinker and Owalabi Paul outdid themselves with their articles. I would like extra copies to hand out to some questioning Adventists.

I live in the Holy City (Collegedale, TN). As an X-Adventist, I have become XXX to many of my former associates. I am 75 and not working for the church any longer, so I am over hiding any doubts and objections. Thank you for your ministry.

COLLEGEDALE, TN

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. As a result, I ask you to conclude our unsolicited re-

lationship by the cessation of any more of your periodicals mailed to my address. As a retiree, my time is short, and I can better spend my waking hours in daily prayerful study of the Holy Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy.

I bear you no ill-will but do think that you are wasting your time trying to spread discontent among church members. Many of your writers appear to be more dissatisfied with themselves than with the standards of the church. I will

continue to pray for you, knowing that Mrs. White confronted much dissent in her day as well. Please take care but 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

Adventists afraid to die

Keep up your wonderful work. I loved your Winter, 2017, articles.

Has it ever occurred to you that Adventism emphasizes long life and health because its members are terrified of dying? My mother confided to my (Christian) sister that she was terrified of dying because she feared waking up in hell. Mom loved the Lord, but she was completely immersed in the Adventist cult. Thank God for the gospel that promises salvation to believers. My eyes are open, and I can go on in complete faith in my salvation, not because of any accomplishments of my own but because of what Jesus has done for us. I need have no fear of death. I look forward to being reunited with loved ones, especially my wonderful baby

son who died of cancer. What an incentive to go to heaven!

PEDRICKTOWN, NJ

Recovering from slavery and deception

My wife and I left Adventism over 15 years ago when we found the Gospel of Christ inconsistent with traditions of legalism upon which our generational heritage of Adventism was based. Week by week in our Bible study and with support from Abundant Life Com-

munity Church we have continued to discover how Christ is our eternal rest and salvation. The more we have studied, the more profound this assurance has become. I attended Southern (Missionary College) and really believed that "climbing Jacob's Ladder" represented our progress in obeying the law. Fifty years later, I can't describe my thrill in discovering that Jesus Christ IS the ladder. We don't "climb the ladder" by keeping the law.

For so many years I believed "Trust and Obey, There is No Other Way" meant "shut up and toe the line or you are out". There was no way to salvation without "climbing Jacob's Ladder." As it turns out, we are not now "lazy" law breakers but daily (hourly) grateful believers that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law! It is hard to contain our joy as we continue discovering that those "old, old stories" spoke of Christ and his completed work on the cross.

Jesus is not sitting in a holy place adding up our scores in the heavenly accounting books, nor is He measuring how many steps we have climbed a ladder by keeping a Sabbath. We also continue unlearning what Adventism taught us about the Fourth Commandment

requirement in defining the final church. The old covenant law was a shadow of the coming Christ who is now and forever our perfect substitute. Our salvation and healing from sin is a free gift that we accept. It's not earned nor owned by keeping the law.

We are so happy to read the letters you share from others who have found the truth that was hidden by our elders. We pray you can continue to publish truth filled articles from Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* We pray for your continuing ministry to those recovering, like us, from the slavery and deception imposed by the tradition of Adventism that we trusted for so long. Thank you!

Warner and Brooke Swarner
PORTLAND, OR

Get a job!

Your vengeance is sad. Get a job!

VIA EMAIL

Bible is fiction

I've got no problems with you folks. As a former Adventist and as a current atheist, I find the letters interesting and entertaining. However, it is a waste of money to send me the magazine. I see the Bible as fiction in large part. At least, I see the Bible's God as a fictional being.

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

If I believed that He was real, I would find him disgusting.

You put together a lovely magazine.

KENNEWICK, WA

Editor's response: This letter is a heartbreaking example of the fruit of Adventist theology. When Adventists realize the religion is flawed, if they have not heard and understood the gospel, they have nowhere to go except agnosticism

or atheism. Since Adventists believe they have learned biblical truth about God, and since they have not been born again through belief in the Lord Jesus and His finished atonement, they are left with only their rational minds to analyze who they have been taught Jesus is and what God is like. Usually such former Adventists retain a sense that IF Christianity is true, the Adventist version is the correct understanding.

Knowing already that living as an Adventist is confusing if not crazy-making, they often opt for unbelief rather than looking for answers within Christianity which they believe has been contaminated by Rome. Furthermore, believing that Ellen White was inspired exactly as the Bible writers were inspired, their faith in the Bible is no greater than their faith in EGW's works. They believe that there is no trusted authority

that can reveal truth; their own minds must be their "last word".

Satan's keeping you out of heaven

I was so upset when I received your magazine *Proclamation!* I wanted to tell you off, but that would not be Christ-like of me... You have twisted the Bible and are speaking out against Ellen G. White, a true prophet of God. You are tearing people down and turn-

An appeal to Dale Ratzlaff

I first read your debates on-line with Dr. Bacchiocchi many years ago. I had not thought about these until I ran across your name and lectures on the internet the other day. I feel strongly impressed to ask you some serious questions. Our final judgment, whether we are judged good or evil, will be the end result of our life and influence on earth. Your influence has been one that deters me from following you because of your...attitude which I have found to be harmful...I have never felt that there was true Christian humility or the Spirit of Christ behind your arguments...

Do you actually believe that your stance all these years is based on an attempt to lead people toward holiness—or just away from something you are despising?

1. Do you really believe that you are leading people to a closer walk with God, to the pathway that will ultimately lead them to heaven?

2. Do you realize that the stance and attitude that you have chosen imitate the tactics of the 'accuser of the brethren'? ...tactics that lead people away from something, but do not lead them toward something better?

3. Have you ever asked yourself what will be the end of your constant attack upon the Adventist church? Are there those who will rise up and call you blessed, or will there be many who will curse you for your influence in their lives that has led them into criticism to the point of apostasy and eternal loss?

4. Has it ever occurred to you that it's possible to fight against the Lord?...You may get a hearing on earth for a time, but are you preparing to lose your place in heaven over argumentation?

5. Do you feel that your soul's salvation depends upon fighting the legitimately held belief of someone else? I am led to question where your trust is placed. It doesn't appear to

be on the sure foundation of the Rock Christ Jesus...

I dare to make a prediction that the platform on which you stand is a shaky one... Sadly, I see that your efforts confuse and dissuade others from their holy walk with the Lord if they listen to you. In this battle in which you have engaged for many years you are headed for sure defeat and potentially eternal loss of your soul, weighted with the loss of leading others astray...

If you are assured that God is leading you, then why is it that Dr. B. had debate with you for many months? Why have you spent years and developed a whole following and organization based on a fight with the belief system of the Adventist Church? Why would you risk your soul and the souls of those who follow you in a stance that is always and forever leading them away from rather than toward holiness, wholeness, and unity?...

I know I risk your anger and animosity in writing this, but I do so as an appeal. This appeal has to be either from the Lord or the devil. Since I am a child of God and have felt it worth your ire to appeal to you thus, I believe I appeal to you in the name of the Lord, the Savior, the one who grants eternal life.

Written in the fear of the Lord and prompted by the Holy Spirit,
VIA EMAIL

Dale Ratzlaff's response

Thanks for your appeal. My ministry is first to present the gospel of faith in Christ and to make it clear. Second, once a person has accepted the gospel, then they need to start on the path toward holiness. The New Testament teaches that the simple gospel of Christ—belief and faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is the saving gospel (1 Cor. 15:1–4).

The correct New Testament path to holiness is learning who we are now are "in Christ" and focusing our mind on things above. If we have trusted Christ, we are to believe the statements and promises of the New Testament which God declares to be true of His born-again children.

The New Testament teaches that we are not saved by works but by faith in our Risen Lord, and we are made holy by the Spirit who indwells all true Christians. We are made holy by gazing at the gospel and submitting to His word. This is true gospel transformation.

Yes, I believe I am leading people to a closer walk with God and ultimately to heaven. When one leads someone away from error that undermines the gospel, he is doing that person an eternal favor.

I pray that Adventist leaders will repent and confess the errors upon which Adventism was built; my reward will be those who call our Lord and Savior "blessed".

I am not sure where you are getting your ideas of what I believe or teach, but my assurance is based upon His work, not mine.

It is not important to you what I believe. Rather, it is important that you believe New Testament truth. If you want to better understand the New Testament gospel and how to develop holiness based upon the principles I mentioned above, I will send you *Gospel Transformation*. I will even include my newest book, *Romans Alive*—the pure gospel, a verse by verse devotional study of the first eight chapters of Romans. You may request these by email at Dale@Ratzlaf.com.

Regarding the discussion I had with Dr. Bacchiocchi concerning the Sabbath: he agreed to send my responses to his email list. However, he refused to send a number of my responses, clearly revealing the errors of his understanding of the covenants. Therefore, I discontinued the discussion.

If you wish to study the Sabbath more in-depth, you will find my book *Sabbath in Christ* to be a help. †

ing them away from God's truth. It is so sad what Satan has done to you, and it will keep you out of the kingdom of heaven.

I'm praying God will open your eyes and bring you back to the truth. You are losing souls for the kingdom. That breaks my heart.

DALLAS, TX

Delivered from hell

I just want to thank you, Dale, so much for helping me to see the errors of Adventism. I was trapped in the pit of Adventist beliefs. Because of my upbringing I stumbled in darkness for years, in and out of the church. Finally, in August, 2016, I prayed for God to show me the truth, and I was delivered from the hell of Adventist teaching and Ellen White. It wasn't until much later and not that long ago that I understood the true and simple Gospel. It seems that Adventism doesn't hold the exclusive on works salvation. John 5:24-25 tells me all I need to know!

SNOWFLAKE, AZ

Thank you for clarity

Thank you so much to all of you for bringing the true word of God with the wonderful gospel to us. We appreciate you and thank God for your steadfastness and faithfulness.

We could not have made it out of Adventism about 10 years ago if it had not been for the clarity that you provide through the magazine and the internet.

CORTLAND, NY

False doctrines and the wine of the Harlot

Only fake Adventists use the term Trinity. True Adventists do not subscribe to the Trinity heresy of the gentiles. True Adventists have nothing to do with the "orthodox definition" or "orthodox Christianity" which is NOT orthodox at all. True Seventh-day Adventists stand alone and are unique in their own views about God regardless of what Sunday-keeping churches think. We will continue to spread our doctrines as far as there are people on this planet. Daily we grow, and we praise God for that!

We are happy to inform you that this Remnant church moves forward and continues to disabuse people's minds of the wrong doctrines learned from fallen Babylon churches, doctrines such as the Trinity, Sunday observance, natural immortality of the soul, eternal hell torment, eating of unclean animals, belief in a finished atonement at the cross, belief in unconditional election, belief that Christ's human nature is excepted from our fallen inheritance.

These are the eight false doctrines, the wine of the Harlot and her Sunday-keeping harlot daughters. We will continue to name these churches thus so that the contrast between God's Remnant and the fallen churches of Babylon

will be kept unmistakably distinct and clear for all people to see. We will not stop calling sin by its right name and pointing people to Jesus, so that if they will have the same steadfastness and perfect obedience Jesus had, they can be saved.

VIA EMAIL

Adventists misinformed

It is such a joy to correspond with you each month. I look forward to writing out the check, knowing the impact LAM is going to have for the kingdom.

I had the opportunity to share the reason for my hope with two Seventh-day Adventist ladies. I was previously acquainted with both of them on a first-name basis. We live in the same community. Two things struck me: how little they knew about the Bible, and how misinformed they were about all non-Adventists. For example, they seemed to think Seventh-day Adventists are the only Christians who believe Jesus is coming again!

At the end of our conversation, one of the ladies kindly told me the Holy Spirit might someday show me more truth.

In Christ alone,
HENDERSONVILLE, NC

Became Adventist in prison

I am a baptized Adventist, baptized in prison approximately 10 years ago. I have not been keeping up much on the Word between then and now.

I recently encountered your publication *Proclamation!* for the first time. I was very surprised to read what it had to say about Adventism, Ellen White, the Sabbath, and so on. I've not heard it before. I was not offended, just very curious.

I did some homework with the content and citations and was astounded at what I saw. I had kind-of accepted Adventist doctrine as accurate and by rote, in retrospect. I realized that by reading your publication. It's very powerful.

Now I am very interested in receiving your publication and learning more of your insights into the Word. I love to learn, and now that I am back on track, I will be with the Word more often on a daily basis.

Also, I've read up on cults but never imagined Adventism could be one.

I have been in prison 37 years, have rehabilitated, and look forward to continuing with the Word upon release. It was Jesus who helped me change my essential ways through the years and decades, truly a reborn person. Thank you for your service in the Lord.

DELANO, CA

Brainwashed, not convinced

Although I wasn't a pupil of Ellen White, I read enough of her works. In fact, I gobbled them up.

One thing stands out clearly now. I have been deceived by Ellen White. Paul says, "Let every man be convinced in his own mind." Unfortunately, when I was growing up, I wasn't convinced, but brainwashed. This Adventist worldview, as you well know, is a hard, hard, hard mindset to escape!

Although we may not agree about all doctrinal details, there are things that we agree on strongly

1. Ellen White was a liar and a thief, and her guide was Satan, not a holy being.

2. The Adventist church is a cult, but it has earnest and honest members who are being called to come out of her.

3. The Adventist church is similar to Catholicism, and by teaching the heresies of Ellen White it has made a mockery of Jesus' blood although they twist Scripture to appear evangelical. But the final atonement and the confusion over a partial atonement—oh my!

4. Jesus my Lord and Savior and is also my scapegoat. Because death was required of the first kid goat, a second goat was needed to fulfill the sin offering. As the plan of salvation is two part, forgiveness and removal, so was the sin offering of Leviticus 16:5.

I can go on and on, but it's not necessary.

A guarantee cannot be broken. It is legally binding if all the conditions are met. I have met those conditions; I have heard the true gospel and believe it in my heart. This belief has given me entrance into the new covenant and its guarantee.

Praise God for His love and His truth!

ALBERTA, CANADA

FINALLY, IN AUGUST, 2016, I PRAYED FOR GOD TO SHOW ME THE TRUTH, AND I WAS DELIVERED FROM THE HELL OF ADVENTIST TEACHING AND ELLEN WHITE.

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LIFE AFTER WITH NICOLE STEVENSON

TRUTH
AND
TRUST
FROM OUR
FATHER

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST COLUMNIST

Father's day is on our doorstep, and I praise God for my husband, who is a wonderful and loving father to our children, and for the godly men and brothers in the Lord whom I have come to know through doing life and ministry together since I was born again. I thank God for using them to show me how trustworthy men live with integrity and care for those around them in godly love and for the sake of Christ.

Many of us have realized that the social and religious dynamics of Adventism played a significant role in teaching us an unbiblical view of relationships. The teachings of the prophetess Ellen White and the culture of being the "remnant" who were seeking to vindicate the law and also God Himself left us feeling like we were playing an endless game of keeping up and looking good. Because of our lack of understanding God's grace to us in Jesus Christ, Scripture's description of Him as our Father was almost impossible to understand.

Moving from Adventism and into the body of Christ was a great shock to me. Christ's body, submitted to the Word of God, is a place of sanctification, of hope, and of growth in the Lord. It reflects the heart of God, gives mercy, practices grace, and seeks to bear the burdens of others. Here we glorify our God and Father and begin to replace the lies of the world with the truths of

Scripture while learning to practice the law of Christ.

This year on Father's Day I will celebrate my brothers in the Lord with great joy and gratitude. Through them the Lord has shown me that relationships between men and women

can be safe and knit together through the bond of the Holy Spirit. They have shown me how godly fathers patiently and lovingly teach their children the ways of the Lord and protect them. They have shown me what a father who delights in his children looks like, and they have fathered my own heart in ways they cannot possibly know. My brothers in the Lord have demonstrated gentle shepherding that speaks truth with love and grace. For these reasons I celebrate them all on Father's Day!

Among those men for whom I thank God is former *Proclamation!* columnist Chris Lee, who resigned from writing this column in the last issue of *Proclamation!* Though I have not met you yet, Chris, you have been a shepherd not only to me but also to a great many of us. Your persistent call to live a life of integrity, rooted in the Word, serving and vulnerably loving the body of Christ has touched our lives and has encouraged us who have read your column all these years. Thank you for your faithful ministry and for your example of living the *Life After* to glorify Christ.

In the Summer, 2016, issue of *Proclamation!*, Chris ended his column "My True Father" with these words, "I'm

also calling on you to be real, to support those around you, to admit life is hard, and to engage with the collective Church—His born again, adopted children." This call may seem difficult to those of us who have left a deceptive system that did not teach us to be truthful or to trust, but I urge you to consider that Adventism is not a reflection of the biblical body of Christ. I too stand with Chris in his call to honest burden-bearing as we engage with the brothers and sisters God has given us in Jesus. It has been here in the faithful body of Christ that I have truly learned what it means to live the *Life After*. †



Nicole Stevenson lives in Southern California with her husband Carel and her two children, Joshua and Abigail. Nicole graduated from La Sierra University with a degree in social work and is currently staying home to raise their kids. Nicole, with her husband Carel, was on the launch team of Redeemer Fellowship, an evangelical church in Loma Linda, California.