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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

A study of John 3: You must be born again

Dale Ratzlaff

At Life Assurance Ministries we often speak of the “simple gospel of Jesus Christ.” It is simple in that even a child or unbeliever with no religious training can reach out the hand of faith and accept its treasures. However the gospel is also profoundly deep with insights that stretch our limited ability

do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jn. 3:1–3

The above text has one of the “divine musts”—you *must* be born again. It is not “ought” or “should,” but a non-negotiable *must*. Therefore our goal is to find out why one must be born again, what born-again means, and how it is accomplished. Sometimes a portion of Scripture is equally instructive in both outlining positive truths and, at the same time, revealing things that are incorrect.

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to understand the mysteries of God. Such is the study before us in John 3. As I write this article, I have no axe to grind. I come as a learner praying for fresh insights that may have eluded my attention the last time I studied this section. Would you, the reader, join with me in asking the Holy Spirit to bring us understanding and insight into the truths that God would have us grasp from this important section?

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You

A man of the Pharisees—not by law keeping

The Pharisees were strict observers of the law. Whether Nicodemus personally, perfectly, kept all 613 biblical commandments in the law we do not know. But we can assume that his life exemplified one seeking to be in harmony with God’s revealed law or he would not have held such a high position within Judaism. We note that Jesus did not tell Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, you have fallen short in ___ and you need to ask forgiveness for this breach of the law and then you will be

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LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES (LAM), INC

MISSION: To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

MOTTO: Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

MESSAGE: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast.” Ephesians 2:8,9

LAM expands its ministry

At the recent annual LAM, Inc. board of directors' meeting it was voted to start supporting five former Adventist pastors in Uganda. Verle Streifling and I have been in communication with these men by e-mail for many months. They have taken a stand for the simple gospel and this has caused them to lose their employment as Adventist pastors. This, in turn, has caused their families to undergo severe financial difficulty. Several of us at LAM have taken it upon ourselves to help these men. We have sent them many boxes of books, tapes, and other study materials for which they have expressed deep appreciation. We have also sent them money from time to time. It is our understanding that when they were employed by the SDA church their remuneration amounted to about \$310.00 US dollars per month.

We at LAM, Inc. after consideration and prayer have stepped out in faith and plan to support each of these five pastors and also provide the rent for a meeting place that will seat 800 people. We have also purchased for them a needed PA system. We have told these men that our aid will only be for one year and that they ought to work hard as good stewards of the gospel so that they can be self-supporting within that time.

As our readers know, we are dependent upon donations for the continuation of our ministry. God, through you, has met our needs to this point—often in direct answer to prayer, often at the very last moment. Would you join us in prayer that we will be able to meet our faith commitment to these five men?

As you read the testimony from Nsubuga Daniel and his other letters, you will see that things are moving very rapidly in Uganda. There are now seven pastors who have taken a stand and we understand that there are others in high places who have privately said they are in agreement with them, who may join them soon. We may need to help these men with temporary financial aid as well. Please pray that these men will stand for truth and that God will supply their financial needs. We understand that there are yet other Adventists who agree with them but have chosen to "play the Adventist tune" and collect the Adventist paycheck.

We are also in contact with other Adventist pastors in different countries in Africa who are starting study groups. There seems to be a crescendo of interest around the world to get back to the simple faith once delivered to the saints.

USA Adventist pastors/scholars write for Proclamation

We recently received several studies on the issues in Adventism from Adventist pastors. They have authorized us to print these articles as they feel truth can stand on its own and will triumph in the end. These men have studied and prayed for a long time and are now nearly ready to announce their stand for truth.

As you read this issue of *Proclamation*, you will see

that these Adventist pastors were hoping that the SDA church would move away from its historic stand on SDAs being the remnant church and the 1844 sanctuary, investigative judgment theology. Recent actions by the church in session and the report of the General Conference President seem to dash all hopes that the church will ever leave these unbiblical teachings.

We, at their request, have published the session minutes and a portion of the official report. We trust these will be useful to our readers. We have noted which articles were written by these men. We have not printed their names as we want them to choose their own time and venue for their announcement about leaving Adventism.

We have also printed a letter from another Adventist pastor who fully supports the teachings of Adventism and denounces this ministry. I responded to this pastor by email and he, in turn, responded back.

Born saved or lost?

It has come to our attention that in the Riverside, California area an SDA pastor has publicly stated that persons are born in a saved or accepted condition because of Christ's sacrifice with nothing that they must do to receive eternal life. One can be lost, according to this theology, only if one continually and willfully breaks the law. It is our understanding that many SDAs in this area have accepted some form of this teaching. Several people have requested that LAM respond to this teaching. It is our prayer that this Proclamation will prove helpful to this end.

Thank you! Thank You!

"Thank you" to those who have so faithfully prayed for and financially supported this ministry. On a number of occasions I have bowed in awe at God's provision. Several times this last year it appeared we would not be able to publish the next issue. We would pray about it, placing it in God's hands whether or not we would continue, and every time someone would send in a large donation to cover the needed costs. Now, with new faith commitments, we need your prayers even more. We seek to be as frugal as possible with the funds that come. We do not pay those who write for Proclamation. No one gets a salary. Richard Tinker has not charged for his excellent work in formatting Proclamation. We do pay a part-time helper a few dollars to keep up our address database and sometimes pay for proofing. I have received several thousand dollars that came in as a special donation to help publish certain books, but other than that we volunteer our time and talent, and see this work as a vital ministry. Thank You for partnering with us!

Donation receipts:

As most of you know, we send donation receipts for each donation showing the total to date for the year. In January we will send a special receipt listing all your contributions for 2002 for tax purposes. !

Proclamation!

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UNRELIABLE

Ellen White

AS A PROPHET

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” Galatians 1:8

Is it possible to be an active and participating member of the Seventh-day Adventist church and yet believe that Ellen White is not reliable as a prophet? Is belief in her prophetic role optional?¹

I propose that there is enough plausible evidence to place Ellen White’s prophetic designation as spurious and doubtful. While the Seventh-day Adventists cannot underestimate her formative and continuing influence, they can revise their long-held teachings about her role—teachings that mislead scores of members to utilize her works as another form of scripture.

Consider the following statements and ideas from her own pen.

1. “I saw that God was in the proclamation of the time of 1843.”² Also, “I saw the people of God joyful in expectation, looking for their Lord. But God designed to prove them. His hand covered a mistake in the reckoning of the prophetic periods ... God designed that His people should meet with a disappointment.”³

I frankly don’t believe that God intends to deceive his people with false dates of the Second Coming. It is impossible for God to lie (Heb 6:18). That God would intentionally mislead his followers in order for them to have a disappointment experience is thus very difficult to swallow.

2. “For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold,

in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.”⁴

This is plainly misleading. It was her divinely inspired visions that endorsed the shut door heresy among the early Adventists. The shut door belief led early Adventists to believe that God had closed the door of salvation to the world, except for believers of the Millerite movement.

James White wrote of Ellen that, “When she received her first vision, Dec. 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine [where her parents then resided] had given up the midnight-cry, and shut door, as being in the past. It was then that the Lord shew her in vision, the error into which she and the band in Portland had fallen. She then related her vision to the band, and about sixty confessed their error, and acknowledged their seventh month experience to be the work of God.”⁵

Ellen herself wrote, “While in Exeter, Main, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand ... When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben’s singing and shouting with a loud voice. Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door.”⁶

Fellow Adventist and friend of the Whites Otis Nichols wrote to William Miller (who also briefly believed in a shut door). In a letter (April 20, 1846) Nichols wrote, “Her message was always attended with the Holy Ghost, and wherever it was received as from the Lord it broke down and melted hearts like little children, fed, comforted, strengthened the weak, and encouraged

Editors note: This article was submitted to Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. by a current Seventh-day Adventist pastor who authorized us to publish it in Proclamation. All emphasized text found in quotations has been added by the writer, unless otherwise noted.

them to hold on to the faith, and the seventh month movement; and that our work was done for the nominal church and the world, and what remained to be done was for the household of faith.”⁷

All this is troublesome, for Ellen White received this false and completely unbiblical shut door teaching from vision. In her original vision about the Advent people traveling on a path to the City, she ends it with this comment about Advent believers who might pull away and abandon the movement, “It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected.”⁸

It is very hard to defend the notion that this was merely a misguided belief or something that a few of them held to until corrected by vision years later. It was Ellen White’s prophetic influence that gave impetus and divine approval of the teaching. The best apologetics on the shut-door issue are lacking in substance and very unsatisfying when looking at the content.

The White Estate admits that, “Ellen misinterpreted this vision.”⁹ While allowing room for morally fallible prophets, the

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Bible declares that, “Above all you must understand, that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.”¹⁰ The Scriptures are trustworthy as far as theological content is concerned, a point of distinction in comparing them with some of Ellen White’s writings.

3. “I saw the state of the different churches since the second angel proclaimed their fall [in 1844]. They have been growing more and more corrupt ... Satan has taken full possession of the churches as a body ... Their professions, their prayers and their exhortations are an abomination in the sight of God.”¹¹

How can we endorse any part of this vision today? We have since redefined this to make it say what it was never intended to mean, a common problem in dealing with her earlier visions/writings. How do we work together with other Christians, if indeed, as the angel told her, Satan has taken full possession of the (non-Adventist) churches. Remember, Ellen White “saw” that the second angel’s proclamation has already taken place (Babylon is fallen). Only later, when Christ didn’t come as expected, did she rework her original intention and say that while Babylon has fallen, its sins haven’t reached full measure.

It is clear, however, that for Ellen White observance of Sunday as Sabbath was already, in her day, the mark of the beast. Its significance as such did not await the decree of a future anti-Christ. She declared that, “The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. Here is a line of distinction between the worshippers of God and those who worship the beast and receive his mark.”¹² She wrote disparagingly of some Adventists failing to understand that “Sabbath... observance was of sufficient importance to draw a line between the people of God and unbelievers”¹³ Describing, as she claimed, a vision direct from God, Ellen White wrote, “I saw that the Holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers.”¹⁴

This line of thinking is also made clear in the Great Controversy—those who worship on Sunday are following the beast and the false doctrines of Babylon. It was Ellen White who advocated and promoted an “us vs. them” mentality among the Adventists.

4. “I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”¹⁵

The concept of personal perfection in order to live without a high priest runs counter to the testimony of Hebrews 7:24-25 which states “because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

5. “There is perfect order and harmony in the Holy City. All the angels that are commissioned to visit the earth hold a golden card, which they present to the angels at the gates of the city as they pass in and out.”¹⁶

One is tempted to dismiss this with a simple, “Well...ok.” But is it, really? Surely no time card is required to enter a City whose only light is supplied by the presence of Him for whom time is irrelevant (2 Pet. 3:8)! Surely no identification card is needed to gain audience with Him who knows the very hairs of our heads! Or is there sin in heaven? What other reason is there for guards, and passes into the Holy City? Against what is it being protected? Could this be more a description of her imagination than a clear vision from God? Should this be taught as inspired teaching in our churches?

6. “If any among us are sick, let us not dishonor God by applying to earthly physicians, but apply to the God of Israel. If we follow his directions (James 5:14, 15) the sick will be healed. God’s promise cannot fail. Have faith in God, and trust wholly in him, that when Christ who is our life shall appear we may appear with him in glory.”¹⁷

7. “The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence. Christ calls upon His followers to come into unity on the pure gospel principles which are plainly revealed in the word of God. We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political schemes... The people of God are not to vote to place such men in office; for when they do this, they are partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office.”¹⁸

8. Regarding the slavery issue, Ellen White was definitely not proactive in helping to abolish slavery. “The Colored People should not urge that they be placed on an equality with White People.”¹⁹ On the same page, she also writes, “The work of proclaiming the truth for this time is not to be hindered by an effort to adjust the position of the Negro race.” It was good to evangelize colored people, but not seek to adjust their lot in life. Frankly, this is just another example of an unreliable prophetic voice.

9. While the church published clear guidelines against plagiarism in the 1864 (Sept 6) issue of the Adventist Review, Ellen White continued the practice for many years. Documentation on this is overwhelming, and I need not spend time reproducing it here.

The real issue isn't so much borrowing, but deception. It's not simply that she borrowed/researched/plagiarized. It's that she claimed divine vision and inspiration—even independence of thought, for the material. The church thinks it was appropriate. I think it reveals more.

As even James White said, “If she borrowed from just one—she borrowed from everybody else. Who can trust her as a Christian woman if she says it came from God and it came from other sources.”²⁰

Adventist researcher Fred Veltman likewise wrote during his study on the Desire of Ages, “Implicitly or explicitly, Ellen White and others speaking on her behalf did not admit to and even denied literary dependency on her part...”

“I must admit at the start that in my judgment this is the most serious problem to be faced in connection with Ellen White's literary dependency. It strikes at the heart of her honesty, her integrity, and therefore her trustworthiness.”²¹

Ellen White's Own View

The blame of overusing and misusing Ellen White's authority as comparable to scripture does not reside simply with Adventist believers. She fostered such views herself, and thus our too common practice of using her writings in a pseudo-canonical manner. While some prefer her quotes about reliance on scripture, there are plenty of other statements where she gives her own writings divine authority.

She wrote, “To claim to be a prophetess is something I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controver-

sy with them.”²² In the same book, she writes, “My work includes much more than this name [prophetess] signifies. I regard myself as a messenger for His [God's] people.”²³

Ellen White, herself, left no doubt about her writings (often called “testimonies”):

“If you lose confidence in the Testimonies you will drift from Bible truth.”²⁴

“If their (testimonies) are not heeded, the Holy Spirit is shut away from the soul.”²⁵

“When I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the spirit of God.”²⁶

“Those who are reproved by the Spirit of God should not rise up against the humble instrument. It is God, and not an erring mortal, who has spoken to save them from ruin.”²⁷ This is one of the strongest statements regarding the authority her writings carry in the life of Seventh-day Adventists. If her writings thus bear the stamp of God, they are truly canonical in the practical sense.

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God.”²⁸

“In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.”²⁹

“There is one straight train of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written.”³⁰

The testimonies “never contradict His Word.”³¹

“Physically I have always been a broken vessel; and yet in my old age the Lord continues to move upon me by His Holy Spirit to write the most important books that have ever come before the churches and the world.”³² Quite a claim!

“God speaks to men today through the Testimonies.”³³

“The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy.”³⁴

“The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.”³⁵

If the Holy Ghost really is the author of her writings, then every church member ought to study them, memorize them, learn them, and read them regularly (which many do). They really would “function” with authority for doctrine and lifestyle, and to reject her harder statements would be unsafe in the last days.

Again, the belief that Ellen White's writings are on an equal level of inspiration and authority as scripture does not derive from misguided members or a select group of theologians, but from Ellen White herself. She fostered a view of her role that remains almost canonical in practice, though not necessarily in theory.

Anyone who influences the lives of millions of people, and has made the kind of claims that Ellen White made, ought to be checked very carefully. Her claims of divine revelation should be examined, just as the claims of Joseph Smith (Mormonism), Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science), Muhammad (Koran), and others should be.

I've found as an Adventist pastor and teacher that scores of

members are confused with how to deal with her. And many become indifferent towards her due to this confusion.

An Authoritative Voice?

The official statement of fundamental beliefs of the church describes Ellen White in fundamental belief #17. "One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church [SDA] and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."³⁶

Even though Christians are counseled not to deny prophets, but to test and examine them,³⁷ it is virtually impossible in Adventist circles to do so. Why? Because Ellen White is seen as being as divine as scripture, before she is even tested.

Frankly, I find Ellen White to be a mix of uplifting and confusing...inspiring and contradictory...Christ-centered clarity and grand speculation.

"If in our study we draw some conclusions from Mrs. White's writings which make her appear to contradict Scripture, then either our understanding of the Bible or of Ellen G. White is not correct. Because she was a true prophet, inspired by the same Spirit as the biblical writers, her teachings will always be in harmony with the Scriptures."³⁸

How do you examine the validity of a prophet, when it is so widely assumed by many within the church ahead of time that the prophet's writings are always in harmony with scripture? Any contradictions or problems are merely apparent contradictions and problems. You can't test a prophet who is assumed to be a prophet before testing. If anything bends, scripture bends to fit the viewpoints of the modern prophet. While not all within Adventism subscribe to this illogical position, many church administrators, theologians, and members do, and it creates a

fuzzy view of inspiration and denigrates the role of scripture as the sole authority for faith and practice.

I'm not advocating sinless infallibility as a test for a prophet. But a true prophet must be reliable on theological grounds. I don't expect scripture to be infallible in matters of chronology or even as a textbook to answer all questions of science, but I do expect what it tells me about God and the plan of salvation to be reliable. I see a difference between the overall reliability of Ellen White and that of the biblical prophets.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

I don't believe that Adventism will ever be taken seriously by the Christian world at large unless it clears up its own inability to clarify, in theory and practice, the role of scripture as the sole source of authority for faith and practice.

Some conclusions...

I've read Ellen White's own writings for almost two decades. I've spent hundreds of hours pouring over her material, comparing them to scripture, looking at historical and sociological settings, and studying books and articles about her (pro and con). I've also spent numerous hours studying the methods and mechanics of inspiration.

Frankly, I find Ellen White to be a mix of uplifting and confusing...inspiring and contradictory...Christ-centered clarity and grand speculation. After years of honest inquiry and evaluation, I find her numerous contradictions to the Bible, unfulfilled prophecies, and "divinely inspired" errors,³⁹ lead me to I believe that she mistook her role as a divinely inspired messenger.

Was she a false prophet? Well, I'm convinced that Ellen White loved the Lord, and simply came to believe that her thoughts, impressions, and dreams on religious matters were from God. I place her in a similar category as many charismatics might place Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn, who have influenced the lives of millions to love the Lord, but who also came to believe that they receive frequent visions, impressions, and communication from God.

I agree with the sentiments of Ellen Whites' cousin, who was quoted very early on in the Adventist movement (1847):

"I cannot endorse sister Ellen's visions as being of divine inspiration, as you and she think them to be; yet I do not suspect the least shade of dishonesty in either of you in this matter. I may perhaps, express to you my belief in the matter, without harm—it will, doubtless, result either in your good or mine. At the same time, I admit the possibility of my being mistaken. I think that what she and you regard as visions from the Lord, are only religious reveries, in which her imagination runs without control upon themes in which she is most deeply interested. While so absorbed in these reveries, she is lost to every thing around her. Reveries are of two kinds, sinful and religious. Hers is the latter.

Rousseau's, 'a celebrated French infidel,' were the former. Infidelity was his theme, and his reveries were infidel. Religion is her theme, and her reveries are religious. In either case, the sentiments, in the main, are obtained from previous teaching, or study. I do not by any means think her visions are like some from the devil."⁴⁰

Two other quotes worth considering:

Dr. William Sadler, who was well acquainted with Ellen White wrote in 1912:

"It is not uncommon for persons in a cataleptic trance to imagine themselves taking trips to other worlds. In fact, the wonderful accounts of their experiences, which they write out after these cataleptic attacks are over, are so unique and marvelous as to serve as the basis for founding new sects, cults, and religions ... It is an interesting study in psychology to note that these trance mediums always see visions in harmony with their theological beliefs ... Nearly all these victims of trances and nervous catalepsy, sooner or later come to believe themselves to be messengers of God and prophets of Heaven: and no doubt most of them are sincere in this belief. Not understanding the physiology and psychology of their afflictions, they sincerely come to look upon their peculiar mental experiences as something supernatural, while their followers blindly believe anything they teach because of the supposed divine character of these so-called revelations."⁴¹

Dr. Walter Martin spent thousands of hours researching the Seventh-day Adventist church and reading Ellen White's writings in order to share his findings with evangelical Christians. He concluded that Ellen White, though she prophesied falsely at times, was not a false prophet.

"Mrs. White, in my opinion, made false statements. She misused what she claimed was the prophetic gift she had. I believe this, in certain instances. But if you're going to try to say that makes Ellen White the same as the false prophecy prohibited in Exodus and Deuteronomy, then you have to demonstrate that Ellen White was an unbeliever and that it was a deliberate and willful perversion of truth regarding salvation and revelation. That's a very fine line... We do admit that anyone who says something in the name of God, and it doesn't come to pass, is prophesying falsely. But there is a deeper level to this. Is it a person who has fallen into sin and is a believer, or is it a person who is a total unbeliever? That's your biblical part—deliberately attempting to lead people away from God... I think, she tried to imbue a lot of her statements and doctrines with the divine seal of authority to get people to pay attention to her. Yes, I think she did that and I think that was sinful. However, I don't believe the intent of Mrs. White, in anything she taught, was to dishonor Christ or to turn against the gospel as she understood it."⁴²

I would agree.

"Contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." Jude 3

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" Galatians 1:8

"Therefore," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who

steal from one another words supposedly from me. Yes," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The Lord declares.' Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord." Jeremiah 23:30-32

"You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:21-22

¹ Her writings were not to be considered a test of fellowship according to some of the early Adventist literature. See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 327–28, 382–84; *Welfare Ministry*, p. 172; *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 42; *Evangelism*, p. 172; and *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 259, 383–88.

² *Early Writings*, p. 232.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁴ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 63.

⁵ *A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 22 (1847 ed.)

⁶ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 97 (early 1846).

⁷ *The Early Years*, vol. 1, pp. 75–6.

⁸ *A Word to the Little Flock*, (1847).

⁹ *101 Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White*, White Estate, March 1981, p. 58.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:20

¹¹ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 189.

¹² *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, p. 223.

¹³ *Early Writings*, p. 85.

¹⁴ *Early Writings*, p. 33; emphasis added).

¹⁵ *Early Writings*, p. 71.

¹⁶ *Early Writings*, p. 39.

¹⁷ *Letter*, Topsham, Jan 31, 1849

¹⁸ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 475.

¹⁹ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 214.

²⁰ *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White*, p. 328.

²¹ *Ministry*, December 1990, pp. 11, 14.

²² *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 34.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁴ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 674.

²⁵ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 46.

²⁶ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 661.

²⁷ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 3, p. 257.

²⁸ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 48.

²⁹ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 67.

³⁰ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 52.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³² *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 67, 68.

³³ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 4, p. 148; vol. 5, p. 661.

³⁴ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 30.

³⁵ *Gospel Workers*, p. 302.

³⁶ *Fundamental Belief* #17.

³⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21

³⁸ Koranteng-Pipim, Samuel. "Understanding the Spirit of Prophecy: Some Key Questions and Principles," *Adventists Affirm* (Fall, 2000).

³⁹ e.g., see www.ellenwhite.org; <http://dovenet.homestead.com/files/sda2300.htm>; www.truthorfables.com (See www.truthorfables.com/Camden_Vision.htm as an example of an 1851 vision many members would find troublesome).

⁴⁰ *A Word to the Little Flock*, 1847, page 22.

⁴¹ William S. Sadler, *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1912), pp. 461–62.

⁴² *Adventist Currents*, vol. 1, No. 1, July, 1983.

Adventist Contend for the Faith?

But I fear that somehow you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to Christ... 2 Cor 11:3

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel

of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Gal 1:6-9

Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 3

By a current SDA Pastor who wishes to remain anonymous

Consider for a few moments a possible scenario...

Scene 1: A pastor stands up in the pulpit and announces that Jesus is coming in three weeks and that the Beast of Revelation is actually the Canadian government.

You'd likely object (especially if you're Canadian), leave, conclude that the pastor was half-nuts, or hope for a change in his/her thinking. Whatever you do, you'd be unlikely to say, "Yeah...ok, no big deal"—especially when the pastor starts printing and delivering anti-Canadian pamphlets.

Another scenario...

Scene 2: The youth leader teaches the kids (including yours) during a bible study that they should have a few beers now and then and not be so uptight about social drinking. After all, he reasons, Jesus drank wine."

Again, you'd likely object, transfer membership, intervene, or hope for a change in his thinking. Whatever you do, you'd be unlikely to say, "Yeah...ok, no problem."

These scenarios should not be normal operation for Christian churches.

Christians are called to... "watch your life and doctrine closely" 1 Tim. 4:16.

As most Christians agree, what we preach and teach, and how we live are important issues. It should never be normal for Christians to knowingly teach and live what is contrary to God's word. If I were to teach the worship of idols, that Jesus never existed, or that we should treat people differently based on skin color, I would hope that my church would object, rebuke, correct, and restore me—anything but consider it normal. Christians should respond, with love of course, to teachings and practices that are contrary to the clear expressions of God's will.

In short, I have preached, taught, and advocated the gospel within the Seventh-day Adventist church for over 15 years. I've discovered some troubling doctrines about 10 years ago that I patiently studied and prayed through. I honestly sought to emphasize the "once for all" gospel and focus on the positive aspects of Adventism. I sought to fill my preaching and teaching with Jesus and winning others to Him.

However, the situation has become such that I can no longer continue with enthusiasm or conviction as an Adventist minister. There has been a personal pain of a lingering theological separation for some time. I love Adventist people and would love to stay purely for social and community reasons, but I've become more and more convinced after several years of study that some of

the key pillars and core values are at odds with the essential gospel of scripture.

I believe with all sincerity, conviction, and love that what Adventism considers normal, in several areas of teaching and practice, shouldn't be...and that it's "not ok." I believe that Adventism complicates and confuses the simplicity of the gospel message, and to continue to teach, preach, finance, support, and promote the gospel in the traditional Adventist framework is not healthy nor productive.

The following points are official church doctrine that I don't believe are acceptable, yet are actively preached, endorsed, published, and championed around the world. And though small pockets of members try to ignore or redefine a few of these doctrines to fit their own worldview, it is nonetheless normal for members to advocate the following beliefs and practices. What is normal should not be. And frankly, though I used to be hopeful, I don't believe enough change will ever happen on these points to bring them within acceptable scriptural boundaries.

Why? These very doctrines make up the uniqueness of the church itself. They define Adventism. They are part and parcel of Adventism. They are SDA DNA...

1. It's normal within Adventism to endorse itself as God's remnant church. As voted during a recent General Conference meeting, the Seventh-day Adventist church is not merely a part of the remnant—it is *God's remnant church on earth*. This is a wide scale belief, endorsed through Ellen White, and will never subside as long as the church exists. It is normal to speak of "the remnant" in exclusive terms and declare other churches to be Babylon, "Apostate Protestants," and "other sheep" that will need to be grafted into God's last day church. *This should not be normal*. It's myopic, self-aggrandizing, and without solid scriptural backing.

2. The sanctuary and investigative judgment doctrine is without merit. It teaches that the atonement is a continuing event to be settled in the future instead of being finished on the cross. It's a teaching that helped make the Great Disappointment (Oct 22, 1844) less bitter, but is a theological mistake. It will never be accepted on exegetical grounds by non-Adventists, since the more a non-Adventist studies the doctrine in the original languages of scripture, the more they disbelieve it. The fact that scores of Adventist schol-

ars disbelieve the doctrine doesn't deal with the truth that it is actively taught and propagated around the world. I believe this compromises the gospel, even distorts it. *This should not be normal*. Yet numerous pastors disbelieve this teaching (I've met several) yet are afraid to give their true opinion on it. It encourages theological evasion, fear, and even dishonesty.

3. Ellen White is unreliable as a prophet and should not be made a test of faith. The church teaches that she is a "continuing and authoritative source of truth" in the fundamental beliefs. This should not be normal. It is normal in the church for people to use her with authority that only scripture should hold. This should never be normal, but will continue to be as long as the SDA church exists.

Ellen White advocated the unbiblical teaching of the shut-door (through divine inspiration). This was completely unbiblical and led the early Adventists through years of confusion and isolationism. She led others to believe she was independent of others in her writings, while continuing to practice plagiarism. Though the church published guidelines about plagiarism as early as 1864, she continued the practice for many years.

To preach that Ellen White was not divinely inspired is heresy within the church. To preach Ellen White from the pulpit is normal worldwide. This issue alone has caused great confusion and distortion over the primacy of scripture for faith and practice in the church. I don't believe Adventism will ever be "sola scriptura" in the truest sense—and that's "not ok."

4. Scripture tells us to "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Adventism has replaced the "once for all" message of the gospel with a new focus on three angel's messages. This is unfortunate and causes scores of members to be confused with the simple message of the gospel. This too, should not be normal.

5. Adventism advocates a dual law theory which seeks to distinguish between moral and ceremonial (and civil) laws. However, the Bible doesn't make such a clear demarcation. One simply cannot distinguish a category every time the word "law" or "commandment" appears. I believe scripture held a more holistic understanding of the law—that all of the laws were part of God's

I believe that Adventism complicates and confuses the simplicity of the gospel message, and to continue to teach, preach, finance, support, and promote the gospel in the traditional Adventist framework is not healthy nor productive.

plan and covenant with his people. The greatest commandments in the law were not quoted from the Decalogue (Matt 22:36-40), while there are many moral laws not found within the Decalogue (drunkenness, envy, partiality, witchcraft, etc.). The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love (Gal 5:6). The acts of the sinful nature are obvious (Gal 5:19) and are clearly given in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

6. The Sabbath is never commanded in the New Testament as a requirement of Christian duty. To assume that the entire Decalogue carries over into the new covenant disregards several scripture passages (2 Cor 3, Gal 3-5, Heb 7-10). The Bible declares that the old covenant (written on tablets of stone) has been replaced by an inward covenant of the heart, directed by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The keeping of days is considered a private matter of conscience (Rom 14), not a point of distinction between God's true followers and those who reject him (as Ellen White taught). Scripture points out that the Sabbath rest for the Christian is "another day"—Today, and is observed by resting in Jesus Christ's finished work (Heb 4:7-11). Hebrews 4 points out that the Sabbath-keeping that remains is entered into by living a life of faith (vs.3 and 9-10). The weekly, monthly, and yearly Sabbaths were all given by God's command, but were also shadows of the more complete rest in Christ (Col 2:16). To celebrate the Sabbath principle on Saturday is fine, even healthy and beneficial, but the focus on the right day is not an issue for the Christian in the new covenant, any more than continued observance of the New Moon festival. There is plenty of reasonable evidence from the Bible to make the continued Adventist emphasis on the "right day" appear overly subjective and judgmental. Since I believe that the "dayness" of the Sabbath isn't a requirement of Christian duty, this creates a deep core value conflict.

7. The other doctrines, such as unclean foods and jewelry, are also peripheral points of doctrine that are not based on all the relevant scripture passages on the subject. Health is very important, to be sure, but there is plenty of evidence that Jesus "declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:19), and that "no food is unclean in and of itself" (Rom 14:14).

8. Likewise, while I do believe that the pope fulfills some of the antichrist symbolism in scripture, I reject the Great Controversy motif on biblical grounds. Adventist eschatology makes the Sabbath the seal of God, and worship on Sunday the Mark of the Beast in the last days. It requires Protestant Christians, no matter how sincere, to unite with Catholics in oppression of Seventh-day Adventists. This eschatological framework pervades the world church in print and sermon. It forms the drama of the Great Controversy. Yet, "Sabbath" isn't even mentioned in Revelation. It's dangerous to build an entire eschatology on allusion, inference, or non-biblical grounds.

As you can imagine, I've wrestled through several years of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual conflict trying to reconcile my heritage with what I understand to be the essentials of the gospel. My own journal reflects the struggle since seminary. Yet, I've sought to stay within "the family" and seek answers while continuing to reach others for Christ. It has been a journey of many years. My initial questions have eventually solidified into personal convictions, and I believe the Holy Spirit is leading (Rom 14:12). Please reread the scripture passages at the top of page eight. They are key to understanding this point.

While I would currently classify myself as a non-denominational Christian, I will appreciate some of the Adventist beliefs. I appreciate the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the holistic nature of man (conditionalism, annihilation, the resurrection), the visible/audible/literal return of Jesus Christ, the free will of the believer, the value of good health, quality education, and an emphasis on missions. It must be noted, however, that the above doctrines are held by scores of evangelical Christians in a variety of faith groups.

I have no ill will towards my Adventist friends, family, students and colleagues. I value these relationships. While I don't aim to burn bridges of friendship, I realize that some may choose to start the fires. I wish for all my friends and family a life full of Jesus Christ, a life of love, and a desire to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."

I encourage you to study these things for yourself. Look at the issues from both sides (both SDA and non-SDA). Read scripture prayerfully and follow what you read. "Watch your life and doctrine (teaching) carefully (1 Timothy 4:16). Don't let distortions and complications of the pure and simple gospel become normal.

This should never be normal. !

"Sabbath" isn't even mentioned in Revelation. It's dangerous to build an entire eschatology on allusion, inference, or non-biblical grounds.

Adventist president says no to changes

<http://www.adventistreview.org/2002-1524/story3.html>

From April 29 to May 8, 2002, about 45 church leaders gathered together in Europe to address the topic of "Theological Unity in a Growing Church." General Conference President Jan Paulsen gave a keynote address that was printed in the June 13 (2002) issue of the Adventist review.

His remarks show a disturbing trend within Adventism.

"We shun the perception of being arrogant, and we don't want to come across as being overly exclusive, but at the same time we believe that being Seventh-day Adventists has direct bearing on our salvation; that while a believer can be saved as a Catholic, I would risk my whole spiritual life and salvation were I to leave what I am now and join any other community."

"A further word needs to be said about our being "loyal to our heritage and to our identity." Some would have us believe that there have been significant shifts in recent times in regard to doctrines that historically have been at the heart of Seventh-day Adventism.

Take specifically our understanding of judgment and Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the prophetic messages in which these teachings are contained. Some are suggesting that since the 1980 (Glacier View) meetings, the very teachings that the church affirmed that year at those meetings have been abandoned, and that the church has essentially moved to accept the very positions it rejected then. Such a claim is a distortion of reality, and nothing could be further from the truth. The historic sanctuary message, based on Scripture and supported by the writings of Ellen White, continues to be held to unequivocally. And the inspired authorities on which these and other doctrines are based, namely the Bible supported by the writings of Ellen White, continue to be the hermeneutical foundation on which we as a church place all matters of faith and conduct. Let no one think that there has been a change of position in regard to this."

"SDA's are the remnant" voted by GC

57th General Conference Session, July 3, 2000, 9:30 a.m.

<http://www.adventistreview.org/2000-bulletin6/actions-proceedings.html>

Editor's note: Adventists do not see themselves as merely a part of the remnant—but as the exclusive remnant church... Calvin Rock was chair of the meeting and took comments on a motion to revise the church's understanding of its own self identity.

SIGRID SCHULZ: I have a question covering line 6 on page 87. I believe that Seventh-day Adventists know the Bible and are looking forward to heaven, but I don't believe that we will be the only ones. There are also other Christians who will be in heaven later. I

would like the sentence changed to read: "I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is part of the remnant church."

CALVIN B. ROCK: You move to amend line 13 to read "I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is part of the remnant church of Bible prophecy?"

SIGRID SCHULZ: Yes.

CALVIN B. ROCK: The amendment is before us. We will discuss the amendment and then vote on it. Are there those who wish to comment?

DANIEL BELVEDERE: I do not believe we are part of the remnant. We are the remnant.

DENTON RHONE: I believe that if we vote that motion this morning, it will tend toward fragmenting the church. I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church, and we need to stand in that conviction.

LASSEW RAEELY: If we vote the amendment as stated, we are indeed going to be voting a rift in our understanding of Bible prophecy. So I speak against the amendment.

CALVIN B. ROCK: I request that we restrain ourselves from applauding. It is not really statesmanlike, and if you would help us by restraining yourself we would appreciate it. Thank you.

JOHN FOWLER: Brother Chair-man, I speak against the motion. Claiming the status of being the remnant church is not theological arrogance, but rather a humble acceptance and an affirmation that we as a church have been called in these last days for a very specific purpose.

CALVIN B. ROCK: I think maybe we have heard enough statements against the amendment.

JAMES ZACKRISON: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry, but I cannot resist the temptation of saying simply that my grandfather and grandmother were married by Uriah Smith at Battle Creek, Michigan. And for three generations, we have believed this is the remnant church and continue to believe that. Therefore, I'm against this motion.

ALFRED BIRCH: I believe that we need to consider whether it is appropriate to have this discussion. This is one of the fundamentals doctrines of the church.

CALVIN B. ROCK: You are correct, and I sense from the speeches that have been made that it is fairly clear as to how the delegation feels. But let's ask you to vote. [The amendment was defeated.] Now, that takes us back to the main motion that Dr. Veloso placed before us. Are there any other comments on this item?

Editors note:

As a former SDA pastor who was taught to base his faith on the Word of God, I am saddened that in this motion and ensuing discussion there was no appeal to sincere Bible study, there even was no discussion of the (supposed) Bible texts which they claim to support this teaching. Rather, there appeared to be only concern that there be no rift in the church and "for three generations, we have believed this is the remnant church and continue to believe that."

UNIVERSALISM

Assessing the Faulty Premises

Verle Streifling

Universalism first appeared in Christianity in the late second century with Clement of Alexandria, whose student, Origen, (185–250 ad) systematically developed it. But it was condemned as heresy in church councils from 394 AD to the 5th Lateran Council of 649. In the Reformation some Anabaptist sects revived this and it was again condemned as heresy by the Lutheran and Reformed confessions.

Since 1750 it has gained an ever-expanding foothold, especially since the rise of neo-evangelicalism in the 1960s, which has promoted the neo-liberal theology of Karl Barth in evangelical colleges and seminaries. They call this new liberal theology “evangelical,” while rejecting the teachings that evangelicals have historically held.

Benjamin Warfield exposed the errors of Universalism in his day, as in his *Plan of Salvation*. Today, God is raising others to carry the torch, as evangelical writers and a growing number of web sites deal with its heretical views. Many will not consider Universalist teaching, rejecting it outright. Yet it does make a number of points that tend to sound logical or even biblical. This scriptural appearance has helped to give it its impetus as well as its appeal to our emotions. The idea that a good God of Love could never punish evil forever, but has indeed saved everyone, is quite pleasing. It feels good. Some even extend this to include the devil and his angels.

But the gospel, is the Gospel, because Christ was God in the flesh, Who bore the wrath and punishment for sin that was ours, so that when we believe in Him and receive Him as our Savior, we may have the eternal life that is His. John 3:16, 36; Rev. 6:16, 17; Rev. 16, etc., tell us that God is not only a God of Love, but also a God of wrath and judgment and justice.

To evade the essential necessity of God’s judgment of the wicked, Universalism urges man’s innate goodness and the possibility of salvation, even in hell. Surely the idea of man’s supposed innate goodness fell with the World Trade towers on 9-11, even for many who disregard scripture. But Romans 1 to 4 proves man’s depravity conclusively. Ch. 3:10–18 says “there is none righteous—no not one” and “all have sinned”(3:23), and Isaiah said all our righteousness is as filthy rags (64:6). The truth is that the closer we get to God, the more “undone” we see ourselves, and the more thankful we are for His marvelous “grace that is greater than all our sins!”

God made man originally a free moral agent, but man fell into sin and became it’s slave (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:17; 8:7). Nothing could rescue him from this state but a new birth (Jn. 3:3, 5). Being overcome by sin in his natural state, one’s rebirth could not be of his own will, the will of the flesh. All men being in the same state, neither could anyone’s rebirth be effected by others, by the will of man. No, the rebirth could only be of God (Jn. 1:13). So then, it does not depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy (Rom. 9:16). God, in sovereign grace, intervenes and causes one to be born again (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Pet. 1:3), granting him faith (Jn. 6:29; Acts 13:48; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8) and repentance (Acts 11:18). This in no way violates the will of man, but changes it. Indeed it sets him free to choose God (Jn. 8:32; Rom. 6:17–18; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1).

That all this is done in this life, not hereafter, is assuredly affirmed by scripture. There is no chance for salvation in hell. This was underlined by Christ in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The Bible stresses that today is the day of Salvation (2 Cor. 6:1–2; Heb. 3:14–4:10. And, Heb. 9:27 says it’s appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment. Those in Christ, like Paul, may confidently expect to be with the Lord immediately upon death (2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 1:21–23). Those who do not believe in Christ, those not born again, Paul says are without hope (Eph. 2:12; 1 Thes. 4: 13; 2 Thes. 1:5–10).

Word and nature

In discussing punishment, Universalists contend that the Hebrew *olam*, and the Greek *aion*, and *aionios*, do not mean eternity, or endless. Yet these same words are used to describe the life we receive when believing in Christ as eternal, everlasting! And in Revelation, “into the ages of the ages,” the expression that describes the eternal punishment of the wicked, is the very same expression used to speak of the eternity of God, and of the joys of the redeemed with Him.

Universalists have two conflicting assumptions: 1. that all men are now saved; and 2. that God’s grace will result in the ultimate salvation of all men. The second requires that the first is untrue. Revelation 19 & 20 show there will be many who will follow the beast, the false prophet, and the devil into eternal

SALVATION

damnation where “the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever.”

Sometimes they will point to selectively cited proof texts that use the words “all” or “the world.” Their catch phrase is “Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:14–15), so all are saved.” The Bible also speaks of Jesus dying for the sins of the whole world, as in 1 Jn. 2:2, where Christ is said to be, “the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” From this they argue that all who ever live at any time will thus be saved.

The words of such verses, however, need to be defined in their own context, and the whole text is not governed by the use of the one word in the text. Rather, the opposite: the context governs the use of the individual word.

For example, the same author, John, writes: “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness,” (1 Jn. 5:19). Universalists dare not apply to the word world in this verse the same meaning they insist upon for ch. 2, v. 2. In that case, all believers would have to be included in the whole world, which lies in wickedness. This would result in the universal destruction of all, instead of the universal salvation of all. Fortunately, the truth in this case is that, as often in the Bible, the world is the antonym of the children of God (the church), who alone are the heirs of salvation.

Consider again 2 Cor. 5:14–15 and 1 Jn. 2:2. Paul, in using the word all, is not contemplating every person to ever live. This is obvious because in v. 17 he says, “Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. . . .” His *therefore* refers back to what he has been saying in previous verses, and his *if* clearly indicates that while some are in Christ, others may not be. For his part, John is addressing the infinite sufficiency of Christ’s atonement; it could cover every person, and certainly will include and cover some persons, not from the Jews only, but from every kindred, tongue and people on the earth, the whole world.

Nothing in any of this warrants denying the Scriptural requisite of repentance from sin, and receiving Jesus in faith. As Peter stated at Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and your descendants, and all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38–39). John stressed, “As many as received Him, to

them he gave the right (Gk., power, authority) to become the children of God. . . . even to as many as call upon His name.” And again, “if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Paul said, “You hath He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). Only after we receive Christ and are thus born again, do we pass “out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love” (Col. 1:13). To those not born again, Christ will say in Judgment, “Depart from me you cursed, into everlasting hellfire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . .” (Matt. 25:41). Here these will go into “everlasting punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (v. 46). Certainly the eternity of the punishment will be the same as the “eternal life” that the righteous will have when they “...inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world” (v. 34).

As we noted above, there are numerous web sites dealing with Universalism today, exposing in detail the faulty premises and doctrines which it teaches. Of course there are also some promoting it. There are also good evangelical books dealing with these issues, such as John Ankerberg’s *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, (Harvest House pub.), or *Death and the Afterlife*, by Dr. Robert Morey, (Bethany House pub.). The inquirer has not far to go, before he realizes the very foundation of Universalism’s false theories is embedded in redefinition of the words of Scripture and selective citing, of the Scripture as well as of the attributes of God’s character, or all of these fallacies and more.

Ultimately Unitarian Universalism leads to using one’s reason and emotionalism as being more authoritative as a rule of faith and practice than the Word of God itself. Indeed, it ends in one having a low view of the authority, inspiration, and inerrancy of the Scriptures, which leads to an equally low view of Jesus Christ Himself. In these areas especially, universalism holds to a ground that is diametrically opposed to evangelicalism, even while it seeks to appear evangelical.

No wonder we are exhorted to “contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints,” (Jude 3) and Peter warned there would arise those who would even deny the Lord who bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). We must be ready to give every man an answer for the hope that lies within us!

You must be born again CONTINUED FROM FRONT

perfect before God.” No, nothing of the kind was even mentioned, because righteous deeds form no basis for our salvation.

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. Ti. 3:5

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also. Rom 3:28–29

This last verse conveys more truth than is immediately seen. We read that we are not justified by works of the law. To expand upon this truth Paul states that God is not God only of the Jews (who have and keep the law), but also of the Gentiles (who do not have and do not keep the law). In other words, Paul’s teaching on justification totally excludes association with law.

We read that we are not justified by works of the law. To expand upon this truth Paul states that God is not God only of the Jews (who have and keep the law), but also of the Gentiles (who do not have and do not keep the law).

Nicodemus would have stressed the careful observance of the Law and the traditions of the elders. For the loyal Pharisee this was the way of salvation. John uses this conversation to show that all such views are wide of the mark. Not a devout regard for the Law, not even a revised presentation of Judaism is required, but a radical rebirth. The demand is repeated three times... Nicodemus and all his tribe of law-doers are left with not the slightest doubt but that what is asked of a man is not more law, but the power of God within him to remake him completely. In its own way this chapter does away with “works of the law” every bit as thoroughly as anything in Paul.¹

A ruler of the Jews—not by position

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and held a high position in society. Many scholars think that Nicodemus was a leading voice in the Sanhedrin,² the council representing the highest Jewish authority. Members of this body included the “chief priests,” scribes and lawyers—whose work consisted in interpreting the law.

The Sanhedrin certainly had complete control of the religious affairs of the nation as the Mishnah indicates. The high court was the supreme authority in the interpretation of Mosaic law and, when it mediated in questions disputed in the lower courts, its ver-

dict was final. Beyond this, the Sanhedrin also governed civil affairs and tried certain criminal cases under the authority of Rome.³

The aged Apostle, John, in carefully wording this incident, teaches us that position has no merit with God. One can be the senior pastor of a large church, a president of a growing denomination, a respected Christian author and have all the titles of respect but none of these take the place of the new birth that one must have if he/she is to be a real Christian.

The Teacher in Israel—not religious education

Later, Jesus referred to Nicodemus as “the teacher of Israel” and indicated that even one schooled in Old Testament law should understand the rudimentary principles of the new birth.

Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?” Jn. 3:10

“The teacher” has the definite article, indicating that Nicodemus, if not the leading teacher in Israel, was at least one of the respected educators who had been entrusted with the religious instruction of the people. Here we learn that thorough religious education, degrees of learning and certificates of outstanding performance are of no value when it comes to the new birth. In writing to the Corinthians Paul reminded them:

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 1 Cor. 1:26

Not correct theology

While this is not as clearly developed as the forgoing points, it is nonetheless an important sub-point to recognize that a correct theology, as important as it is, will not save. We are told that the devils believe yet will be cast into the lake of fire. That perfectly correct theology is not necessary for salvation is seen numerous times in Scripture. In the next chapter of John, Jesus gives the “living water” to a woman of Samaria. Jesus reminded the Jews of His day of the many examples of people being saved outside of Judaism. Doubtless these people had many flaws in their theology.

“But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.” And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; Lk. 4:25–28

The new birth—a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit

If law keeping, a respected position in society, a thorough religious education and correct theology will not suffice, then what will bring us the blessings of salvation? We come back to our text.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

The word "again" in Greek can also be translated "from above." One must be born from above—receive the new life of God given by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Jn. 3:5-8

The new birth is outside the realm of physical attainment. It is a supernatural event that transforms us at the center of our being. It is regeneration to such a degree that we can be called "a new creation."

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Cor. 5:17

Jesus compares the new birth, or the person who has received the new birth, to the wind. We hear the sound and see its evidence but we do not know its source or the destination.

The new birth is outside the realm of physical attainment. It is a supernatural event that transforms us at the center of our being.

Thus the person who has experienced the new birth is to be led by the Spirit sometimes even where he does not want or choose to go.

Nicodemus seems to be utterly confused and asks, "How can these things be?"

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. John 3:14, 15

Nicodemus could now better understand the teaching of the new birth. He was familiar with the record of the serpent in the wilderness. He could now see its simplicity.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived. Num. 21:8, 9

What, then, is the secret to the new birth? It is first recognizing that we have been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin. This

does not take much insight! Just ask anyone who has been bitten by a venomous snake! I have heard that a snake bite is much worse than a bee sting!

We now come to the second "must" of this incident. "The Son of Man *must* be lifted up." Many differing theories of the atonement have been presented explaining just why Christ had to die on a cross. One thing is certain, He had to do it! It was His work there on the cross taking the poison of sin upon himself, bearing its penalty for all who would look to Him for healing.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. 5:21

That was Christ's work and His alone. What was the result of Christ's work?

...so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. Jn. 3:15

The second thing we must do—and this is where most of us fail—is look away from self and the wound. There is no cutting or sucking out the poison of sin. We have all received a fatal dose and there is nothing we can do to neutralize its deadly power. No amount of law-keeping will do. No honored position, no advanced religious education (and not even correct theology, alone) will suffice. We must look away from anything man-centered. We must look and live. What does it mean to look? Looking is the same as believing. It is trusting Christ alone for salvation. When the bitten Israelite looked at the uplifted serpent, he was depending on what God would do for him and not in what he could do for himself.

We now come to the most profound, simple and loved verse of Scripture.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Jn 3:16

Our eternal life is rooted in God and the extent of his love—He so loved! What did he love? He loved the world, that is, mankind—every tribe and race thereof—despite all our sin, degradation and evil independence. How much did he love? He loved enough to give his only begotten Son!

If Christ were not a member of the divine Trinity and fully God in his own right, the sacrifice of Christ would be barbaric. But when we realize that Christ was fully God then Christ's death on the cross becomes one of the greatest evidences of God's love for lost man.

...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:19

This infinite love is expressed to "whoever believes." Some want to define "whoever believes" as only the elect who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. Others want to place meritorious weight on man's act of believing. Regardless of one's understanding of this profound mystery, let us simply make sure that we are trusting Christ alone for salvation. Let us reach out the hand of faith and grasp the simple

promise of God, “He who believes has eternal life” Jn. 6:47!

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. Jn. 3:17

Here we clearly see the divine purpose. God wants to save the world! How is one lost?

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. Jn. 3:18, 19

It is clear that our salvation or judgment has to do with our acceptance or rejection of Christ. He is the “testing truth.” I will never forget the joy that I had when the weight of the truth of

In one breath John could say not only that, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life,” but also, of him who does not believe and is not born again, that, “the wrath of God abides on him.” This teaching is against universalism...

this verse became clear to me! No more fear of coming judgment! I have already been judged “in Christ”! No more trying to get myself good enough to go to heaven! No more focusing on the law of sin and death. Rather, I could look away from self to Christ and the love of God that reached even me!

In one breath John could say not only that, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life,” but also, of him who does not believe and is not born again, that, “the wrath of God abides on him.” (Jn. 3:36) This teaching is against universalism—the teaching that everyone will be saved. It is also against the teaching permeating certain churches in Southern California that one is “born saved” and the only way to be lost is repeated and flagrant breaking the law. No, Scripture in general and John 3 in particular make it clear that one must be born again.

A personal illustration

It was Sunday morning—we had gone to church on Saturday night—when I sat down at the computer to write this article. I was just getting a good start when my wife, Carolyn, reminded me that I should visit Don Brice, a Catholic real estate client that was near death in the hospital. At first I was somewhat frustrated in that I had been robbed of what I thought would be an uninterrupted morning in which I could write without the myriad distractions that usually fill my day. But, I pondered, perhaps this was a divine appointment where I

could be used by God to bring the simple message of the gospel to this dying man, and where God could teach me something about the new birth. It was God’s way of moving me from the intellectual ivory tower of hermeneutics to the bedside of God’s beloved child who needed to hear the simple gospel.

As I drove to the hospital I started to turn on the radio, thinking that the last game of the World Series might be on. “No,” I said to myself, “you ought to spend the time in prayer.” So I prayed that God would open the door for me to proclaim the simple gospel of Christ. I prayed that the doctors and nurses would not interrupt my visit and that I could be with Don alone. I entrusted the situation to God, asking Him to work things out according to His will. Arriving at Boswell Hospital, I inquired at the desk where room 242 was. The lady behind the desk rose and said, “I will take you there, it is a long way from here.”

“You don’t have to do that,” I said, “Just give me directions.” But she insisted. It was a long way but she stayed with me until we arrived at room 242. There, I saw Don. His head and hands were so swollen that I hardly recognized him. However, he was not alone, as I had requested. In the room with him were his wife, Marilyn, and two friends. Don could hardly talk, and when he did, I could hardly understand his feeble voice.

After a few words of greeting, I was able to share with him the simple gospel of the new birth and how one must look to Jesus alone. I quoted to him a few simple key verses. I shared with him that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead for our justification. I told him all we have to do is believe and trust in Christ. “He who believes has eternal life.” I asked him if he believed in Christ. He nodded his head and crossed himself—his way of expressing faith in Christ. He said in his weak voice, “I have entrusted the whole situation to God.” His wife, a Lutheran, wiped her eyes as she recognized for the first time that Don, indeed, had trusted his life to God. Don closed his eyes, I had prayer with the group, and leaving several “Life Assurance” booklets with Marilyn, I left. Only God knows what took place there. Like the wind we do not discern the direction of the Holy Spirit yet I had the feeling that God had given Don eternal life in Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He had also given me a fresh illustration of the simplicity and necessity of the new birth. Shortly after I left Don slipped into a coma and I believe went to be with the Lord.

Yes, there are two imperative divine “musts”: Christ *must* be lifted up. We *must* be born again. And the way we are born again is by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit as we look away from ourselves and anything we can do, to Christ and what He has done for us. Yes, that is living the eternal kind of life. **!**

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 209.

² Jn. 7:50.

³ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 271.

They still leave: Letter from Uganda CONTINUED FROM BACK

some of my people left the city to go to the villages in response to EGW's plea to leave the cities. One day I read in "Singing With Understanding" and in "A companion to SDA hymnal." The two books talk about Bolton and Davis. Bolton wrote a song "Not I but Christ." They told how she resigned four times from being White's secretary and give a simple reason. However, when I studied more I saw the reason, which every good follower of EGW must know. For something to be a lie does not require a hundred of them. Then I also questioned the investigative Judgment, I also learnt the truth and many things which were in error that I used to take as so dear were really far from salvation. I kept it to my self for a long time. Later I started teaching the truth and the church could not contain me any longer. Pr. Nsereko advised me to leave the church so did Pr. Kaggya the Field President. He said "I don't have any more work for you in the ministry." They immediately told Lindsey Thomas who was sponsoring my in service study of B.Th. to stop and he stopped, saying I was following the off shoots. From that time life became hard with my family. We had two children and my wife was expecting our third. My third born child came at a time when survival was not easy. However by then I was in touch with Life Assurance Ministries. Bro. Dr. Streifling gave a lot of courage and Br. Dale sent me money to buy food and also to help the new born, we called him Tulina Omubeezi which means "we have a helper." God proved so close to us, more than before.

I managed to team up with four other pastors—all Adventist theologians who were stopped for the same thing—and we started preaching Christ. We studied the material sent to us from LAM. This included tapes both visual and audio and many books. Pr. Mark Martin also sent a lot and his tapes are heard by many people now in Uganda. Life Assurance Ministries started giving all of us the financial help to maintain our families as well as paying for the hall which serves as our church and people have started coming in numbers.

In the presence of the [SDA] ministerial secretary two more pastors crossed from Adventist to Evangelical. Much that I thought was the truth I now see to be a lie. To my brother pastors in Africa, I know what it means to transition and to do so without salary.

Choose today whom you will worship. Remember He will never leave you. In my life the greatest achievement is knowing Jesus. I thank LAM for their help. Anyone who would like to do missionary work, especially former SDA ministers, please think of Uganda first. Come and see what is happening here. This is just a little of the many shocking and amazing experiences we have undergone as well as the joy of seeing people come out boldly to Christ. **!**



Possible tax shelter

If you have appreciated assets such as stocks, bonds, real estate, etc. and you chose to donate these to the ministry of LAM, Inc. We may be able to give you a donation receipt for the current market value of these assets. In this way you can support LAM without paying capital gains on the growth of these assets and, at the same time, receive a deduction on your income tax. For further information call (800) 355-7073 and we will put you in touch with a qualified financial consultant.

I am so blessed by your magazine

Dear Friends in Christ, I am so blessed by your magazine. My husband and I left the church some 20 years ago now, but we can still feel the pain of those that are going through the transition period. I cried when I read Pastor Gladson's book and remembered back when our pastor was fired. Please use this small gift to keep your wonderful work in progress. May the Holy Spirit give you words to keep answering to people who sometimes are very rude and demeaning. You always answer with a sweet spirit. May God richly bless your ministry and we will keep our prayers ascending for those that are making the "decision of a lifetime."

I was blessed by every article

I just wanted to say THANK YOU for the latest issue [Sept/Oct] of *Proclamation* magazine!

It has been the best issue so far for me and belongs in my books of reference material for more than a few reasons! I was blessed by every article, especially those on Life in the Spirit. The article on the Scapegoat/Azazel was such a blessing, finally helping to put to rest a lingering worry about the Atonement and bringing the scapegoat into the Light! Thank you for your Editor's note following the article, as well, which clearly summed up the issues and witnessed the Light Himself and the shadows. Part of Adventism's confusion has been that it did not recognize that the whole Old Testament points to Jesus Christ. For traditional Adventism, the Bible is about the "Great Controversy" which is "between Christ and Satan." The centerpiece of this "GC" is the Law. Even though all the old shadows & sacrifices are clearly said to point to Christ, the confusion

about the Day of Atonement came because Christ is not the object of Adventism: the Law is the object, and Christ and Satan are seen as players in the cosmic drama about the Law. But we know that Christ is the Beginning, End, and the Object of the Bible. All points to Him and finds fulfillment in Him. Ironically, the Adventist confusion about the Day of Atonement (claiming it also shadowed Satan) is representative about the confusion over the "Great Controversy." It's not about the Law, it's about Jesus! Thanks again & bless you! In His love, Ramone

Get acquainted with God whom I discovered was my kind, loving, heavenly Father

For over 50 years I was afraid of God because of Ellen White's dos and don'ts. Her "I was shown" and "In the night scenes" state-

A quart of putty into a pint jar!

Dale: I read your latest proclamation. I was especially interested in the letter you printed in response to a letter from one of our pastors and I must say it was filled with the usual mix of doubletalk that I find in your publication. I was especially amused by your statements about being a conservative Bible scholar. How can you call yourself conservative when you openly have admitted previously that you did not believe what you were teaching, yet continued to collect a paycheck for years. Now you tell this pastor that you believed and kept the Sabbath for years, and that you still love the Adventist people, but your magazine preaches continual doses of hatred for Adventists. I cannot believe your double talk. Dale, you are not even close to being a conservative Bible scholar, you are so liberal you squeeze a quart of putty into a pint jar and call it a perfect fit. You have abandoned the Sabbath and apparently you have even abandoned the truth on the state of the dead. You also published a ridiculous article by the apostate professor Gladson with a strange take on Ecclesiastes, another example of your distorted attempts to put Adventist theology in a bad light. I have written you several times regarding articles in your magazine that are in error, you, as always, ignore these corrections. This pastor wrote you about discrepancies in your statements in your journal and you dismiss his and every other point anyone else makes that proves your theology is nothing more than a complicated maze that distorts the Gospel and tends to make your followers completely oblivious to the love and simplicity of the Gospel. You and your ex-adventist cohorts have invented philosophies so far over your own heads, you can't even find a beginning or an end. The Gospel does not need your so called attacks on

Adventists, who for the most part love the Lord Jesus. The Gospel is simple, John 3:1 You are making it a hate message against Adventists. You could use your Proclamation in such a way that Adventists and others could enjoy and benefit of the simple Gospel, but you prefer to cater to people who have left the church, most of whom have left, or have been disfellowshipped because of some cherished sin, then turned against the church rather than admit to the flaws in their characters. You need to change your heart brother for the hour is late. Time is running out for you.

[SDA] Pastor Bob Hoyt Mt Holly, New Jersey, (name used by permission).

Editor's response

I still am at a loss to know where you received the idea that I taught things in which I did not believe. I have never done that. True, I remained an SDA pastor for some months after I realized the error of 1844 as I worked through the issues. To my knowledge there are many SDA pastors who do not believe in 1844 or EGW who are still working in the church... I understand your desire to safeguard the traditional Adventist teachings. I was once where you are now. It is my prayer that we will each follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to us through the inspired Word of God. Dale Ratzlaff

Pastor Bob Hoyt writes again

Dale: I do not believe you were ever where I am. I studied my way into the church and I have been in the Adventist church now, 40 years. You were at least a second or third generation Adventist and you never understood it correctly or you would not be attacking it. There are at least 10 different angles that support and cooperate 1844. I don't care that

you taught it, you were teaching it wrong, because if you were teaching it right, there is no error in it. I know that prophecy backward and forward and you will not trip me up on it. You again are doing what you will stand in the judgment for with your vendetta against Adventists. I shudder to think of your fate, Dale, even if you are right in one or two things and you could be, although I have yet to see any truth in anything you teach. As far as you teaching what you did not believe, I distinctly remember you saying that to either me or Sam Bacchiocchi. I will go back as I have saved much of what you said to him and see if I can find it. You explained that you were a pastor and taught somewhere and you took a paycheck for years after you claim you no longer believed. I do not remember whether it was the Sabbath or the Spirit of Prophecy or 1844 that you stumbled on first. I could understand the Spirit of Prophecy because 75% of all SDA's do not understand Ellen White and misconstrue her teachings. Then when someone understands her correctly they are looked upon as apostates because so many SDA's are in the dark as to the right understanding of the SOP. That is no excuse to do what you have done. I will guarantee as I live that you are covering an agenda with your constructed theologies. Your doctrines are so reminiscent of Jehovah Witnesses, in that your attacks on the Sabbath are constructed with wild conclusions that are without biblical hermeneutics. You have constructed a wild theology around them so much so that only dissident Adventists that are covering agendas agree with you. You are in the deepest trouble and I truly feel sorry for you in the end. You are another Canright. May you somehow find your way back to the truth.

[SDA] Pastor Bob Hoyt Mt Holly, New Jersey, (name used by permission).

ments made me feel I needed to kneel at her feet and ask her to intercede with God for me. Her do's and don'ts were overwhelming. But when she said "the Sabbath is the Seal of God, I was ready to ignore her and get acquainted with God whom I discovered was my kind, loving, heavenly Father. For many years I have been free from bondage. I now like a good cup of coffee and my wife wears a wedding ring. God put a jewel in the nose of Jerusalem as well as rings in her ears. Ezekiel 16:12

I thought I was the only one

Early this year I visited my daughter and son-in-law in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and found your *Proclamation* magazine. I brought the magazine home with me to Canada and have read it from cover to cover over and over again. I am 73 years old and have been a member of the SDA church since I was 24 years old and for nearly 50 years certain things have bothered me within the church but I always breathed a prayer to the Lord and ask Him to take away the spirit of doubt and set me free but the more I cry out, the more it bothered me, and the more I kept on searching the scriptures. You see, Mr. Ratzlaff, all those years I thought I was the only one going through these feelings, that is, until I found your wonderful magazine and I thank God with all of my heart that even though I've only read one of your magazines, a number of issues have been made clear to me and I am not ashamed anymore—not ashamed to say what I feel, not ashamed to trust my conscience and I don't feel guilty anymore. I really cannot afford to ask you to put my name on your mailing list. I mean I cannot pay you for it but can you please ask someone who receives *Proclamation* to send me all their used ones? I would be so grateful to you and I will pray that God richly bless all of you to continue doing such a great job. The articles in your magazine have helped to set my conscience free. I now rejoice in the Lord. Thank you—God bless you all.

Editor's note: We sent this lady all the back issues we still have and gladly put her on our mailing list. We do not charge for *Proclamation*, we just pray that God will provide the needed funds.

I wept tears of joy

As I read the July/Aug issue of *Proclamation*, I wept tears of joy. When my wife and I resigned from the SDA church, many thought we were losing contact with reality, but we were entering into a stage of closeness to Jesus. We praise the Lord for His mercy, grace and forgiveness. Now we have

fellowship with Jesus' children from all backgrounds. Des Ford's books and your books and others have opened a whole wide universe of worship, praise, and exaltation due to the One who took our sins and gave us His righteousness. May He be uplifted! Rev. 5:11-13. Keep on searching for the one last sheep. There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents, than over 99 just persons who need no repentance. Have you read Phillip Yancey's book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

Appalled that you would attack God's Remnant Church

Dear LAM, Your magazine the *Proclamation* came the other day and I read it and I was appalled that you would attack God's Remnant Church with such vicious lies. Read Rev. 12:17, Rev 14:12... The first text I want to discuss is Col. 2:16 by the way you misquoted Col. 2:16; its Sabbath days not Sabbath day... No wonder so many are leaving the SDA Church, because we were taught all the do's and don'ts of the law and not the love of the law... The Day of Atonement was a special festival that pointed to what Jesus would do for us after He died and went back to heaven. Heb. 7, 8, 9, & 10. Since all these things were misunderstood by the disciples and the new believers, see the old testament had special new moon Sabbaths that pointed to Jesus coming, see, Isa. 1:13, Ezek. 45:17, Ezek 46:3, Hos. 2:11. The most interesting is Isa. 66:23 from one new moon to another we will keep the Sabbath in the new earth...

Editor's note: The Greek word for "Sabbath" in Col. 2:16 is plural. However, in its plural form it often refers to the Seventh-day Sabbath. It is plural in the Greek in all of the following references. "Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields" (Mt. 12:1), "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good?" (Lk. 6:9), "On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a river side" (Acts 16:13). Col. 2:16 uses a common pattern (seasons, months, days) that is well established in the Old Testament. Therefore in Col. 2:16 "festival" refers to the yearly, seasonal feasts, new moons refers to monthly feasts, and Sabbath days refers to the weekly Sabbath day. We should, therefore, understand the "Sabbath" in Col. 2:16 as the weekly Sabbath. To say that this Sabbath is the yearly sabbath makes Paul redundant. He has already referred to the yearly feasts under the term "festival."

Found only in animal products

Thanks so much for the work you're doing with *Proclamation*! I hope this contribution will cover some additional subscriptions. I

don't remember if you have addressed vegetarianism recently. I was raised vegetarian... After suffering for years with migraine headaches and exhaustion I started taking vitamin B12 supplements (something found only in animal products). I am now so much healthier! The migraines rarely come now and I have so much energy!

We read ourselves out of Adventism

We appreciate your ministry. We read ourselves out of Adventism approx. 15 yrs ago... God was showing me two groups of people and you need to know who you are. In Romans 11, I began to understand who I am, the Church. God is speaking to Israel throughout and has not finished with Israel. Then when I read Revelation it all makes sense if you understand who is being spoken too. Adventists do not know who they are. They are not the remnant, Israel is. We are the Church, Gentiles are of the world. Israel the remnant—I love it!! Makes sense now. I always had so many unanswered questions—Doctrines are debilitating, let scripture interpret scripture. No more proof-texting. It says what it says. You do not have to juggle anything.

A "peace that passeth understanding"

Dear Dale, When I first heard the Gospel of grace in its fullness three years ago a "peace that passeth understanding" filled my soul. I heard the good news articulated by Smuts Von Rooyen & also by Mrs. Honk. I first heard you speak when we visited Monterey Bay 25 years ago. It took courage for you to follow your conscience. You could have winked at the fallacies of Adventism and you'd now qualify for a nice sustentation pension. All of us tend to be legalistic and idolatrous by nature. Adventism is surely legalistic and their idols are EG White, Sabbatarianism and life style. They are investing everything in these idols and it is impossible for them to admit they have made a bad investment. In any case "something" is better than "nothing" thus we shouldn't rob SDA members of their "something" until we are sure they understand the Gospel of Grace.

Mail letters and donations to:

Life Assurance Ministries
PO Box 11587
Glendale, AZ 85318



They still leave: Letter from Uganda

Pastor Nsubuga Daniel

Dear brothers and sisters, I have the pleasure to share with you my testimony for which I will never be sorry. If some will not finish my testimony, let me start

with its conclusion and then go back to the beginning. Knowing Jesus Christ and His saving grace has been the greatest achievement in my life, which will never be taken away from me. Like Paul I can say, "I no longer live my own life..."

My Dad was converted to Adventism the year I was born, but my Mom was not, so my dad worked hard to ensure that my mom would join the SDA church, which efforts proved fruitless. As children we used to go with Mom to the Anglican Church and Dad could go alone. With time, my brother who follows me started going with Dad at church. You can imagine how my parents used to quarrel over the matter. When I was in primary Five, a young Adventist boy in Primary Four invited me to Sabbath School. I did not want to go, but because Muwonge was a good friend of mine and he also used to share with me the pancakes his mom used to pack for his lunch, I went. When I got to the SDA church I liked the Music so much and I found that the people shared with me their joy and happiness. I then started attending the SDA Church. I liked it and took in everything taught me as the Gospel truth. At home I could read the Scripture as the rest listened, then also read the so called "Spirit of Prophecy." Young as I was, I was introduced to the health principles as promoted by Adventism; our family stopped using coffee, tea and so many other things. For my secondary I went to Bugema Adventist College, and I got the training any Adventist parent would like to give his/her son/daughter. I liked the music I found in the College, many at times I could not sing but my heart is full of joy and treasured every word and enjoyed the tune. While in Bugema I saw a book "Singing With Understanding" by Edward White and I treasured it a lot. There were also many books by White and I could not go to bed before I read a chapter and I

treasured every thing. When I finished my studies the church appointed me to head a simple elementary school called Kalungu SDA Primary School. By that time I was teaching in two church schools and one public school so my everyday program was very tight. Later I transferred to Katikamu SDA Secondary Teacher where I gave instruction in Music and was the Dean of Boys as well. In Katikamu I often served as a lay preacher and took many other responsibilities in the church. Every Sabbath I would encourage people to stay behind and go through the SOP [Spirit of Prophecy-EGW] books as well as give them what we used to call "news"—monitoring the pope's movement, etc. My preaching was often threatening people and my best sermons were about the Judgment. I could recite from memory many of EGW's comments like "Angels with terrible exactness scribe unfulfilled duty influence ..." GC and many others in that line. The station Director, Pr. Walugembe, attended one of my series of studies and suggested that I join the ministry which I took up with an open hand. I was taken to Kireka for training in ministerial practice, then to a Junior SDA seminary then at Katikamu, and I was given six churches to pastor. I regret all my days as an Adventist pastor as they were often filled with dealing with the problems left by other pastors before me. The laity could give me a list of pastors and how they behaved. Those who were there before me with evidences like children born out of wedlock and affairs with someone else's wife. I remember how my senior pastor was imprisoned for using the house girl and the girl disclosed the matter. For sure in Adventism there was a lot of hypocrisy. Ministers could just pretend and many did. However, I must leave this topic for it's not the reason that led me to transition out of Adventism and the private life of these pastors you would not wish to know.

I was transferred to another powerful district in the city and things were OK there. They were strongly in for EGW and even

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

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