

Proclamation!

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, INC.

FALL

FOUNDER ADVENTISTS • ORIGINAL ADVENTISTS • SABBATH LISTS • GOOD LIVING EVANGELISTS

Jesus reveals his mission in Matthew 5

The law fulfilled

HAROLDO CAMACHO

...in Deuteronomy the blessings are conditional upon the people keeping the law, but Matthew has Jesus pronouncing His blessings upon whoever is there listening to His words.

The many references to the Law and the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthew indicate that Matthew wrote this "Good News" with the Jewish reader in mind. His purpose was to introduce Jesus Christ "the son

of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1) to both the children of the seed and of the faith of Abraham.

Thus, one needs to read this gospel first as a Jewish reader

might, informed by the many narratives of the Old Testament and its teachings from the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

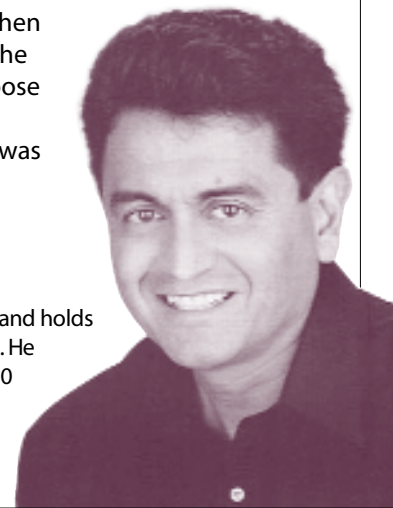
In Matthew's time, believers were aware that Jesus understood the Old Testament Scriptures were fulfilled in Him. The gospel of Luke tells us that Matthew himself had been in the upper room when Jesus, after His resurrection, came in among

them (Luke 24:33). Matthew heard directly from Jesus how the Old Testament pointed to His sufferings and death and what His death meant for sinners.

"And He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms about Me.' And He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures. And He said to them, 'So it is written, and so it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be proclaimed in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'" (Luke 24:44-47)

Therefore, as we read Matthew's gospel, there should be no doubt that Matthew is writing with Jesus' words in mind. It must be assumed that when Matthew refers to the Law, his direct purpose and intention is to show that the Law was

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Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

MISSION

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

MOTTO

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

MESSAGE

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

Haroldo Camacho was born to an Adventist pastor's family in Cartagena, Colombia, and holds a Ph.D. in theology. He emigrated to the United States early in his life with his parents. He became an Adventist pastor and worked for the Adventist denomination for nearly 20 years until 1991. Since 1993 he has been teaching and writing about the gospel as a lay person in the Southern California area. He has three adult children and works as a Certified Court Interpreter for the Judicial Council of the State of California.

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Jesus keeps the covenant for me COLLEEN TINKER

The moment is branded on my memory. It was May, 1996, and Richard and I were sitting in a meeting of the San Diego chapter of the Adventist Forum. We and Richard's uncle and aunt had driven down to hear the family's "black sheep," Dale Ratzlaff, give a presentation on the New Covenant. Although our uncle had come prepared to challenge his cousin Dale, he was silent. Dale's delivery was calm, clear, and cogent, and there was a palpable sense of reverence in the room. Every dissenting voice was still.

For the first time in my life I understood that I had absolutely no role in keeping God's covenant with me—in fact, I was not even part of the agreement.

the Lord Jesus, to be eternally faithful to the Father and also to me.

Tears blurred my sight. For the first time in my life I understood that I had absolutely no role in keeping God's covenant with me—in fact, I was not even part of the agreement. Jesus did it for me! My life-long paradigm of salvation changed in that instant.

As Dale paused for an intermission, I wandered into the hallway, stifling my urge simply to cry. A woman I knew well, with whom I had sat on many committee meetings for the magazine I helped produce, met me, her own eyes full of tears.

"Isn't this wonderful?" she said to me intensely, echoing my own reactions. "The Holy Spirit was in that room!"

From that day I began to realize that Jesus fully and completely did what I could never promise, let alone deliver. He fulfilled the law. His life, death, and resurrection met every one of its demands. As I pondered what Jesus has done, I began to experience what 2 Corinthians 3:14-16 describes: the veil which had clouded my mind as I vainly tried to "be good" began to lift. As I looked directly at Jesus, I discovered that the spiritual confusion and cognitive dissonance which had defined my experience evaporated.

When a package containing Dale's two books, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* and *Sabbath In Crisis* (now expanded and republished as *Sabbath in Christ*) arrived unexpectedly on the first Sabbath of the next month (how appropriate!), Richard and I were ready to read. As I began to understand the new covenant, I realized that Jesus was the answer to every question I had. The law? The Sabbath? God's expectations of me? They all were answered and fulfilled in Jesus. He was all I needed!

In this issue Haroldo Camacho explains how Jesus revealed and explained His mission as the law's fulfillment in the Sermon on the Mount. Mark Martin discusses what Jesus meant by saying He was Lord of the Sabbath, and we introduce Kenneth Brantley with his answers to seven Sabbath questions. Rebecca Lorey tells her story of finding peace for her hurting heart, and Pat Dammell shares her longing for her son to know complete freedom in the New Covenant. We also look at Adventism's non-trinitarian roots and see how this bias is still reflected in the church's hymnal.

I praise God for keeping His covenant with me. I pray that He will glorify Himself in my life and also in yours as we grow in trust and surrender to His finished work on our behalf.

Dale had drawn two diagrams on a white board. One demonstrated the terms of the Old Covenant in which God made an agreement with the people of Israel. God promised to bless His people's obedience, and they promised to obey Him. The second diagram illustrated the terms of the New Covenant. God promised to bless His people and give them new hearts, and the people...but that was the astonishing thing: the people were not involved in the agreement! Instead, the Father made His agreement with the Son.

Jesus, the eternal God, took on humanity, and as our substitute, He gave God perfect obedience. Not only did He give God the only perfect obedience any human had ever delivered in the history of the earth, but He also took unto Himself all the sin His human brothers and sisters had ever or would ever commit, and He became the perfect sacrifice for sin God required.

Because He was human, I suddenly realized, Jesus could represent me perfectly to the Father. Because He was God my Creator, Jesus had the power and authority to offer perfect obedience and to take responsibility for my sin. The New Covenant is better than the old one because it doesn't depend upon my keeping its terms. Jesus keeps the New Covenant for me. His promises are better than mine. Because He and the Father are the two parties in this agreement, I am saved from my own unfaithfulness. I can trust my Savior,

Proclamation!

Founding Editor
Dale Ratzlaff

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Colleen Tinker

Copy Editor
Cristine Cole

Design Editor
Richard Tinker

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Phone (909) 794-9804

www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org
www.FormerAdventist.com
E-mail: proclamation@gmail.com

My journey toward God

REBECCA LOREY

I grew up in a typical Adventist home except for the fact that my parents divorced when I was just 4 or 5 years old. My brothers, sister, and I grew up with my dad and attended SDA schools. We were a distant and somewhat unemotional family. Coupled with my parents' divorce, these factors led to a sense of abandonment and rejection. I desperately clung to my belief in Christ from an early age because that was the only place I found hope. I have vivid memories of crying to God and feeling he was close to me when I was still quite young.

Unfortunately, as I was being taught Adventist doctrine as I grew up, I began hearing things that were upsetting to me. I can vividly recall being told that Jesus and the angels would not be with me if I went into a movie theater or bar. I even recall a picture of angels hiding their eyes as they stood outside a bar and cried for the man inside. God would not be with me always, even unto the ends of the world. I also remember a very specific discussion on the need to be perfect to get into heaven because I would have to stand before God without an intercessor, and perfection was the standard. I never would know when my name would come up because Jesus was up in the most holy place judging us right now. Needless to say, these beliefs just added to my fear of abandonment, and I never really felt assured of my salvation.

I seemed to hit a wall in my relationship with Jesus. I felt God, not just my family, would abandon me, too. I kept looking for the assurance people talked about, but I was never able to

find what I was looking for in the Sabbath school lesson or books I read (mainly from the Review and Herald Publishing Association, because they were the only available books to read). I persevered in the Adventist lifestyle, going to Adventist schools, marrying an Adventist man. I did all the right things and looked the part of a successful Adventist, but I was not any more assured of my salvation nor was I any closer to God as a result of my careful choices. I would pray, though, that God would help me have the relationship I longed for so much and never seemed capable of achieving.

Then, in the fall of 1997, my husband was asked to play the drums for a new outreach program called "Oasis" at Kettering Seventh-day Adventist church in Kettering, Ohio. Being the supportive wife, I started to go with him each week. The message being taught there was not at all what

Rebecca Lorey is an occupational therapist and works at Kettering Medical Center in Kettering, Ohio. She lives with her husband Michael and their three children in West Carrollton, Ohio. They have attended Southbrook Christian Church in Centerville for over three years. *Photo by JD Brown.*



I heard on Saturday mornings. The concept of grace and a life outside the rules and regulations (legalism) of Adventism were being taught. I started reading the books that were being used by the team to prepare these programs, and my heart began to fill.

We were blessed with friends that were also questioning some of our Adventist beliefs. Greg Taylor, a former pastor at the Kettering church, had left Adventism by this time. Upon his departure he shared a letter on the Internet entitled, "An Open Letter to Our Friends and Family." (This letter is currently posted on www.formeradventist.com.) Because he had been a former pastor here in town, his letter had a big impact in our church community. This letter, while we personally hadn't read it at that point, was the basis for many of our debates about what we believed regarding Adventism.

Gradually, the years of conditioning and teachings of error began to fade away, and God's simple truths shone through. I had found what I was longing for all my life. I began to have a different view of the "Great Controversy." Yes, there is a war, but the battleground is for my heart, and God wants me to be alive and vibrant, not fearful. My heart is the treasure of great value. He is not up in heaven looking critically at me to see if I make even one mistake but is desperately fighting for my heart.

I was like Cinderella, a worthless, dirty, servant girl, and Jesus was my "Prince-Charming," my Rescuer, my Savior. He not only rescued me, He died for me. He died that my heart can be made whole and alive again. Several times Jesus uses the analogy of a bridegroom and bride to help us understand his love for us. His is a love that is not dependent upon my perfect behavior, what I do or where I go.

I had bought a lie just as Eve had. I had been deceived. I was trying to please God so he would not abandon me. I was keeping the commandments and working so hard at this impossible goal that I ended up ignoring God's gift of grace. Just like the Pharisees, I could not fully recognize Jesus as my Savior. I was still under the law and trying to earn my way to heaven.

As my understanding of grace and my relationship with God grew, I was amazed at my previous acceptance of obvious error. I also became angry as I came to know of Adventist pastors that did not stand up for the truth they knew—or worse, knowingly preached error. I truly believe the Adventist Church knowingly perpetuates error.

Thankfully, God led us to a church where I have been able to grow continually in my understanding and love of Jesus. I know so many Adventists that do not believe in Ellen White but continue to attend Adventist churches. I wish I could give them just a glimpse of the blessings I have received since I left Adventism. I want to say to them, "Why would you stay in a place that stunts your growth and shrivels your heart when you could live a life full of adventure and freedom?"

I am no longer afraid of God leaving me or of not being good enough. I do not feel the trials that come my way are punishments from God or His abandonment of me.

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believe in Ellen White
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I have found something of great value to teach my children. They don't need to be perfect and follow a long list of rules, which I assure you they cannot do. My husband and I teach them the message of God's love and grace. I cannot imagine trying to raise my children under the dysfunction of Adventism now that I know the "Good News," not only for their sakes, but for mine. God has changed me by his Holy Spirit to be less selfish and more patient. Because I have been given grace, I now can extend it to my children and husband. God has changed our hearts by his love.

The most meaningful compliment I have ever received was from my mother-in-law. She was visiting us after we had left the Adventist church. Naturally, as an Adventist herself, she was concerned about our departure from Adventism. After spending a few weeks with us, she shared her thoughts and feelings before she left. She said that after observing our family, she no longer felt that we were "being led astray." Her fear was relieved because of the change for the good she had seen in our home. The Holy Spirit had changed us. The fruit of the Spirit was a bigger witness than any of our words.

Wow, I was so humbled.

Last year during our "40 Days of Purpose" study at our church, we were asked to give an analogy describing our view of our lives. In the past, I viewed my life as shooting a class-5, white-water rapid on an inner tube all by myself—no guide, scared to death, and honestly not sure if I would survive. And by the way, I'm not a very good swimmer.

Now I view life as the same class-5 rapids, but I'm in a raft with a Guide I trust. The ride is still sometimes frightening (that's what makes it exciting), but this time I can't wait for the next set of rapids. I may be surprised by the twists and turns of the journey, and it may be wet and cold at times. Just like a ride at an amusement park, however, I know that my arrival at my destination is assured.

Now, when I see dying patients at the hospital or have a friend who is hurting, I have true hope to offer them instead of "...well, if you believe the 27 fundamental beliefs and are baptized and have confessed all your sins, even the hidden ones so you will be blameless, then, if you are good enough, then and only then, will God take you to heaven." Now I can say, "God loves you now, just as you are. He died fighting to save you, and He won! He loves you as a filthy, selfish and sinful person. He wants desperately for you to love him and believe in him. Your heart is a treasure of great value; it is priceless. Don't believe the lie of Satan that you are not good enough or perfect enough. God's grace is sufficient to cover all your sins and faults."

Your heart is a battleground, and this is war. You will be hurt. The question is, who is winning?

"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. There is no judgment awaiting those who trust Him." John 3:17 & 18a (NLT)

Michael and Rebecca Lorey are in the process of working with their pastoral staff to organize a Former Adventist Fellowship at Southbrook Christian Church. Details will follow as plans are finalized. For information, call (937) 859-6113.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

J . M A R K M A R T I N

In his gospel, Mark describes the ministry of Jesus primarily to a Roman audience. Because his audience is Gentile, Mark is careful to explain the Jewish traditions and ideas Jesus confronted so his readers would understand that Jesus was more than just an ordinary man. In fact, He had divine authority over the devil, over the effects of sin in people's lives, over people, and over tradition. In the last five verses of chapter 2, Mark shows that Jesus also has authority over the most sacred and revered institution of Judaism: He is Lord of the Sabbath!

Just before he introduces Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath, however, Mark quotes Jesus saying, "And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins" (Mark 2:22).

One of the Jewish traditions that could not hold the "new wine" of the Gospel of God's grace was the Sabbath. It was part of the old wineskin of the Law that was going to become obsolete (Hebrews 8). Jesus boldly foreshadowed the obsolescence of the Sabbath when the Pharisees accused His disciples of breaking the law when they picked and ate grain on the holy day.

"And it came about that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of

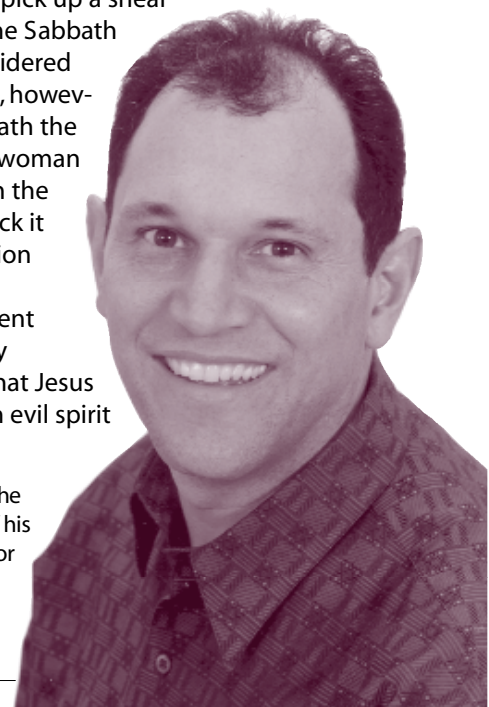
grain. And the Pharisees were saying to Him, "See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" (Mark 2:23-24)

Their deep anger about the disciples' apparently careless Sabbath behavior resulted from the fact that the day was the Jews' national sign from God that they were in covenant with Him (Exodus 31:13, 17). God had given Israel the Sabbath to point forward to what the Gospel rest of the Messiah would be like. Instead of honoring it as a day of rest, however, the Pharisees in their misguided zeal had turned the Sabbath into a day of restrictions. There were thousands of confusing, complex, and sometimes contradictory rules to keep.

For example, it was forbidden to pick up a sheaf of barley or wheat and carry it on the Sabbath because such action would be considered bearing a burden. It was acceptable, however, to put a wooden spoon underneath the sheaf and pull it along. Moreover, a woman was forbidden to look in a mirror on the Sabbath lest she see a gray hair, pluck it out, and thereby break the prohibition against harvesting on the Sabbath.

The rabbinic rules were so stringent that a synagogue leader indignantly rebuked those who, having heard that Jesus had healed a woman crippled by an evil spirit

J. Mark Martin is senior pastor of the over 10,000 member Calvary Community Church in Phoenix. It is part of the Calvary Chapel Fellowship of churches. Mark pastored in the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the support of his wife Leslie for six years before being forced to resign in 1982 because he persisted in teaching God's grace. Pastor Mark's teaching is extended in an outreach to Seventh-day Adventists as well as being on three radio programs in the Phoenix area. He also has an extensive CD and tape ministry. His sermons and other materials about Adventism are available at www.sdaoutreach.org.



Jesus is saying He's greater than the temple, and thus greater than the Sabbath. He's saying that everything the temple represented was in Him. The atonement, the law including the fourth commandment, the presence of God—He embodied all that the temple had protected and foreshadowed.

simply by touching her, began coming to Jesus to be healed on the Sabbath. "There are six days of the week for working," the leader snapped; "...come on those days to be healed" (Luke 13:14b NLT).

Such rigidity did not foreshadow the Gospel rest of Christ.

When the scribes and Pharisees confronted Jesus about his disciples plucking and eating grain as they walked through a field, they were accusing them of harvesting, an activity that was expressly forbidden on the Sabbath day (Exodus 34:21). The religious leaders brought their protest directly to Jesus instead of approaching the disciples because they believed that a teacher was responsible for his disciples' actions.

"See here," they said triumphantly to Him, "why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

By bringing this complaint to Jesus, the Pharisees were setting Him and His disciples up to be prosecuted. The Law required there be a formal warning given to Sabbath breakers prior to prosecution, and this confrontation would serve as that official warning.

"Throughout the Gospels you'll notice that Jesus only defends Himself when His deity is attacked or His authority is questioned," says New Testament scholar J. D. Pentecost.

This was such a situation. Taking responsibility for his disciples, Jesus defended them saying they had a right to do what they had done. Then He answered their protest by reminding them—the scribes and scholars of Judaism—of their ignorance of God's Word!

Matthew gives a clearer picture than Mark does of Jesus' reasoned response on this occasion: "But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?'" (Matthew 12:3-4)

Jesus is saying, "What David and his men did is what I'm doing here."

Unknown to the priest, David was already God's anointed leader of Israel. He and his men were on a divine mission to protect the kingdom. As God's anointed, David had the authority to give his men the priest's food because they were serving the Lord. Similarly, although the Pharisees did not recognize the fact, Jesus was God's anointed King and Priest, and He and His disciples were also on a divine mission to save Israel. Because He had divine authority, Jesus had the right to allow his disciples to pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath.

Moreover, serving the Lord supercedes Sabbath law. Matthew 12:5-8 gives us this insight:

"Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

The priests worked on the Sabbath in the temple because the temple superceded the Sabbath. The temple housed the law and the ceremonies foreshadowing Jesus' atonement, and traditionally it had housed the very presence of God in the shekinah glory. The service of the temple was more important than the Sabbath because the temple housed the symbols of the atonement as well as the revelation of God and His actual presence.

The temple represented Israel's calling and identity. It was the symbol of all that set the nation apart from the world. Now, however, Jesus really offended the Pharisees: "But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here," Jesus is saying He's greater than the temple, and thus greater than the Sabbath. He's saying that everything the temple represented was in Him. The atonement, the law including the fourth commandment, the presence of God—He embodied all that the temple had protected and foreshadowed.

Jesus was saying, in effect, "My disciples and I are doing God's work—a work greater than that done in the temple by the priests who break the Sabbath every week. In fact, I am the temple, I am the law, I am the Sabbath, I am the atonement—I am God among you!

"I'm not breaking any rules; I make the rules! I am LORD of the Sabbath!"

Jesus is not merely one voice among many voices; He is The Voice that tells us what is right and wrong.

Now, to show His authority over the Sabbath as its Lord, Jesus backed up His claims with a miraculous sign: "And He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there with a withered (shriveled, deformed) hand. And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Rise and come forward!' And He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?' But they kept silent. And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness [Gk. *porosis*, meaning to be covered with thick skin, or to be covered with a callus] of heart, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his

Bible answers to Sabbath questions

KENNETH BRANTLEY

In the last issue of *Proclamation!*, Kenneth Brantley ran a challenge to find Scriptural support for seven common Seventh-day Adventist assertions about the Sabbath. Here we present his Scriptural answers to those seven assertions.

1. Was the Sabbath given to "all mankind at creation"?

The book of Genesis provides documentation of all that was given to our first parents at creation. Note the Sabbath is not mentioned:

- a. Life in the image of God, 1:27
- b. God's blessing, 1:28a
- c. The ability to procreate, 1:28b
- d. Dominion over every living thing, 1:28c
- e. Food (herbs & trees), 1:29
- f. Eden (a special home), 2:8 & 15
- g. Marriage, 2:18, 21-24

2. Is the Sabbath the "memorial of creation"?

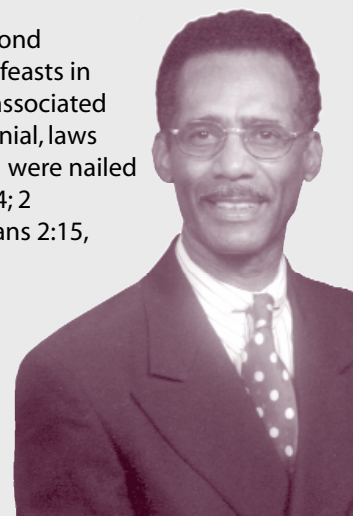
The feasts of Passover and the Blowing of Trumpets are the only days God designated to be kept as a "memorial." Sabbath is excluded. (see Ex. 12:14, Lev. 23:24)

3. Is Sabbath-keeping the "seal of God"?

The Bible says "God's 'seal' is the 'Holy Spirit,' not the Sabbath. (see Eph. 1:13, 4:30, and 2 Cor. 1:21-22)

4. Is worship on Sunday the "mark of the beast"?

Kenneth Brantley owns Brantley Broadcasting Network which operates Christian radio stations in North Carolina, and he is the director of Truth Ministries International based in Ardmore, Tennessee. Before leaving Adventism he served as general manager of Life Talk Radio and was an executive board member of the Breath of Life Television Program. Both programs are ministries of the North American Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He and his wife Janice are currently in the process of establishing a multi-faceted, non-denominational ministry in Huntsville, Alabama. Contact information: The Brantley Broadcasting Network, P.O. Box 665, Ardmore, TN 38449.



hand was restored. And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him."

It's interesting that the Sabbath confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees is followed by the story of a man with a withered, malfunctioning hand. Throughout the Bible the hand represents a person's works. We say we are not saved by the "works of our hands." By that we mean we're not saved by anything we can do.

The Sabbath was a shriveled wineskin. It had no strength to save anyone. Under the Law, people had shriveled, and they didn't have the ability to do God's work. In the New Covenant, however, Jesus supercedes the Sabbath, and He brings His people to life and their hands to productivity.

"One man regards one day above another... Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind." (Romans 14:5, NASB)

5. Did Jesus ever break the Sabbath?

"He was not only breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father." (John 5:18)

6. Was the weekly Sabbath "a shadow of things to come"?

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you... with regard to... a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come." (Colossians 2:16,17, NIV. The "Sabbath days" [*Sabbaton* in Greek] are weekly Sabbaths. See Greek (#4521 in Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*.)

7. Do the Ten Commandments constitute God's moral law? Were the other laws given to Moses at Mt. Sinai ceremonial, and were they nailed to the cross?

No Biblical writer ever made a distinction between the "moral" law and the "ceremonial" laws. The weekly Sabbath is listed first among the Feasts and Holy Convocations in Leviticus 23, and second among the ceremonial offerings and feasts in Numbers 28 and 29. The Sabbath is associated more often with the ritual, or ceremonial, laws than it is with the moral laws. They all were nailed to the cross. See Romans 2, 7, 8, & 10:4; 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 3 & 4, Ephesians 2:15, 16; Colossians 2, Hebrews 8, 9 & 10.

Since Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, He is now our Sabbath rest. The author of Hebrews explains this reality in Hebrews 4:1-13. The Sabbath was an issue of national identity for the people of Israel—a covenant sign for Israel alone. Jesus came to remove the barriers dividing Jews from Gentiles and to include everyone who believes in Him in the New Covenant. Now there is no need for an obsolete symbol of national identity foreshadowing a future rest.

Jesus has accomplished the work of God, and now His people from every ethnic background can rest in the assurance of their salvation in Him (Hebrews 4:8-11; 1 John 5:10-12).

We no longer need to embrace a day to find our identity. We embrace Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. In Him we rest.

"Tell me the old, old story..." Uh, which one?

A brief look at Adventist hymnology as a window into Adventist belief

COLLEEN TINKER WITH RICHARD TINKER AND STEVE PITCHER
JEREMY GRAHAM, RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

About five years ago Richard and I sat with our older son Roy in a Bible class on the campus of Biola University in La Mirada, California. Roy was considering attending Biola, and we were experiencing college day with him. We had officially left the Adventist church only two years before, and this was our first experience on an evangelical Christian college campus.

The teacher called the class to order and said, "Please reflect on the hymn you see on the screen. We'll discuss it after you've had a few minutes to think about it."

We looked up, and projected in front of the class were these words:



Richard and Colleen Tinker attend Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands, California, where they also lead a Friday night Former Adventist Fellowship (FAF) Bible study. Their studies as well as a collection of stories by former Adventists and a live discussion forum are online at: www.formeradventist.com.



Steve Pitcher, who became a Christ-follower and was baptized in a Baptist church at the age of seventeen, subsequently spent 15 years as a Seventh-day Adventist. He left Adventism about five years ago and currently attends Pathway Christian Church in Riverside, California. He also attends the weekly FAF Bible study in Redlands.

Come, Thou Almighty King

Come, Thou almighty King,
Help us Thy Name to sing Help us to praise!
Father all glorious, over all victorious,
Come and reign over us, Ancient of Days!

Come, Thou incarnate Word,
Gi rd on Thy mighty swo rd, our prayer attend!
Come, and Thy people bless, and give Thy Wo rd success,
Spirit of holiness, on us descend!

Come, holy Comforter,
Thy sacred witness bear in this glad hour.
Thou Who almighty art, now rule in every heart,
And ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power!

To Thee, gre at One in Three,
Ete rnal praises be, hence evermore.
Thy sove reign majesty may we in glory see,
And to ete mity love and adore!

The words were familiar—and somehow unfamiliar. As I read the stanzas, I realized for the first time that this hymn is an invocation to the Trinity. I felt like crying as I realized the powerful declaration of both God's transcendence and immanence this hymn contained. Why had I never noticed the reverent worship offered to the Trinity in this song?

Changed words

"Come, Thou Almighty King" was the second hymn I had sensed was different from the way I originally learned it. The first was "Holy, Holy, Holy." Here are the words:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise Thy Name,
in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Puzzled by the fact that these words seemed both familiar yet strange at the same time, I finally looked up the song in the current edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* published in 1985. The song appeared almost as it appears above. Verse two, however, had been altered to read "Angels adore Thee" instead of "All the saints adore Thee," and the third line of the same verse had been changed to "Thousands and ten thousands worship low before Thee." Similarly, the second line of the third stanza had been altered to read: "Though the eye of man Thy great glory may not see."

Then, on a hunch, I looked up the hymn in the preceding edition of the Adventist hymnal—the one published in 1941 and used until the 1985 version was released. This older version was the one I had sung from during my years growing up in the church.

Sure enough—I found even more radical changes. The first verse was the same as it appeared in the new edition with this exception: instead of the fourth line—"God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!"—the old edition had these words: "God over all who rules eternity!" The fourth stanza was missing entirely.

I realized with sudden clarity that until 1985, the Adventist church had been singing this well-known hymn of the faith with references to the Trinity completely obliterated from it. Not only that, the hint that God's people who have died might be praising Him even now had been eliminated (verse 2), and this elimination persisted to the present time. (This idea had to be eliminated in order to preserve the doctrine of soul sleep for Adventist worshipers.)

Antitrinitarian roots are showing

It is a fact the church admits (but does not often publicly discuss) that the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including James White (Ellen's husband), were staunch anti-Trinitarians. Ellen White never really clarified whether or not Jesus was eternally divine. She did write several statements

about Jesus originally being an angel and God elevating Him to a position of authority and sonship. Sometimes her statements revealed confusion about Christ's identity.

"The man Christ Jesus was not the Lord God Almighty, yet Christ and the Father are one. The Deity did not sink under the agonizing torture of Calvary, yet it is nonetheless true that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,

It is a fact the church admits (but does not often publicly discuss) that the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including James White (Ellen's husband), were staunch anti-Trinitarians.

that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'" (*Lift Him Up*, page 235, paragraph 3, copyright 1903).

"The highest of all angels, He girded Himself with a towel, and washed the feet of His disciples" (*Manuscript Releases*, Volume Twelve, page 400, par. 1).

"Before his fall, Satan was, next to Christ, the highest angel in heaven" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 01-14-1909, Paragraph 4).

"God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son" (*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 8, page 268, par. 3).

Her book *Desire of Ages* (published in 1898 and more recently proven to contain large percentages of plagiarized material; see "Recant, No! I Stand Firm" by Walter Rea, *Proclamation!*, November/December, 2004) became the turning point in the Adventist understanding of the Trinity. Although many statements in *Desire of Ages* were clearly trinitarian, Ellen White continued to publish non-trinitarian statements in succeeding years as noted above. The church's first administrative affirmation of the Trinity did not occur until 1931, and that statement was not accepted as an official Adventist doctrine until the General Conference session in 1946. In 1980 a more comprehensive, classical Trinitarian statement was adopted at the General Conference session in Dallas. Interestingly, however, the 1980 statement triggered "renewed debate along a spectrum of ideas from the reactionary to the contemporary." ("The Adventist Trinity Debate," Jerry A. Moon, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol 41, No. 1, p. 9, copyright 2003)

While Adventism today claims to hold a belief in the Trinity and includes it in the *27 Fundamental Beliefs*, still the way Adventists understand the Trinity is murky. Among contemporary Adventist theologians, authors including Raoul Dederen, Fernando Canale, Richard Rice, and Fritz Guy have

published statements questioning classical Trinitarian theology. (ibid., p. 9-10) Their observations reveal that there is no consensus among Adventist intellectuals and theologians regarding the Trinity.

One current view suggesting a tritheistic understanding appeared in the October 31, 1996 issue of the *Adventist Review*, the "flagship journal" of the church. Written by Gordon Jenson, it appeared on page 12: "A plan of salvation was encompassed in the covenant made by the Three Persons of the Godhead, who possessed the attributes of Deity equally. In order to erad-

While some of the more blatant eradications of the Trinity were corrected in the 1985 edition, others were not. Still more astonishing, the newer edition contained editorial changes which downplayed the atonement and the blood of Jesus even more than the earlier edition had done.

icate sin and rebellion from the universe and to restore harmony and peace, one of the divine Beings accepted, and entered into the role of the Father, another the role of the Son. The remaining divine Being, the Holy Spirit, was also to participate in effecting the plan of salvation."

The antitrinitarian roots of Adventism still color the church's doctrines today. Perhaps because the original Adventist view of Jesus described Him as inherently lower than God, Adventists still have trouble exalting him to an all-powerful, sovereign position. Similarly, Adventists also have trouble embracing the terrible reality of Jesus' shed blood and our total dependence upon Him.

Realizing that the Adventist version of the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy" betrayed the foundational anti-Trinitarian belief of Adventism (as well as, I discovered, the current questioning of the doctrine), I became curious about other hymns as well.

Sunday discovery

One Sunday afternoon last summer, Richard and I sat at our kitchen table with our friend Steve Pitcher and began our pursuit of the truth about Adventist hymnology. Armed with the current 1985 edition of the Adventist hymnal, the previous 1941 edition, and a non-Adventist Christian hymnal, we began comparing the words of hymns. Thinking we would find that the heresies written into some of the hymns of the 1941 edition would be corrected in the 1985 edition, we were not prepared for what we found. While some of the more blatant eradications

of the Trinity were corrected in the 1985 edition, others were not. Still more astonishing, the newer edition contained editorial changes which downplayed the atonement and the blood of Jesus even more than the earlier edition had done.

Finally, after we three spent several hours on two separate Sundays comparing hymns and making notes, I went to the internet* and found the original poems for all the hymns in question just to make sure that the non-Adventist hymnal we used hadn't been edited in some way.

The first hymn we compared was the one that had moved me so deeply that morning at Biola: "Come, Thou Almighty King" (words often attributed to Charles Wesley). At last I knew why it had so amazed me. The 1985 edition of the hymnbook contained the standard words, but the 1941 edition completely eliminated the second stanza about the Incarnate Word, and a substitute verse replaced the last stanza honoring the "great One in Three":

Thou are the Mighty One,
On earth Thy will be done; from shore to shore,
Thy sovereign majesty, may we in glory see
And to eternity love and adore.

Again, until 1985, the Trinity had been completely missing from this song. Not only the Trinity, but the stanza about Jesus being the incarnate Word had likewise been omitted.

Amazed, we continued our search. We discovered that the hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (words by Isaac Watts) had likewise been updated in the 1985 edition. In the 1941 edition, this stanza with its direct reference to the divinity of Jesus had been left out:

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

While the stanza was replaced in the 1985 edition, both books eliminated the following verse which underscores Jesus' suffering and shed blood:

His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.

The hymn known to Adventists as "Praise Ye the Father" (words by Elizabeth Charles), we discovered, is a paean to the Trinity and is actually entitled "Praise Ye the Triune God". Both editions of the Adventist hymnal contained all the original verses with one alteration. In both, the last line of the third stanza, "Praise ye the Triune God", was changed to "Praise the Eternal Three". It seems a nearly insignificant change, but it promotes a more tritheistic view than a trinitarian view. Further, the phrase "Triune God" has been eliminated from the title as well.

We also found less obvious but no less significant alterations downgrading the supremacy of Jesus in other hymns as well. We discovered that the hymn "I Need Thee Every Hour" (words by Annie S. Hawks) had been faithfully printed in

the 1941 edition of the Adventist hymnal. In the updated 1985 edition, however, the last stanza, which stresses the divinity of Jesus and our absolute dependence upon Him, is eliminated:

"I need Thee every hour, most Holy One;
O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son."

More changes

"Now the Day Is Over" is a poem written by Sabine Baring-Gould set to a tune by Joseph Barnby. It contains six short stanzas. In both editions of the Adventist hymnal, stanzas three, five, and six are missing. Stanza five expresses the confidence we have that as believers we stand sinless in the eyes of God:

When the morning wakens,
Then may I arise
Pure and fresh and sinless
In your holy eyes.

Leaving out stanza five accommodates two Adventist beliefs stressed by Ellen White. The first is that the atonement is not yet complete because Jesus is still applying His blood in the heavenly sanctuary. The second is that it is presumption to say we are saved. We cannot be certain of our salvation until Jesus comes again.

Stanza six is a doxology praising the Trinity. Significantly, it, too, is missing:

Glory to the Father,
Glory to the Son,
And to you, blest Spirit,
While the ages run.

One other significant change in both editions of the Adventist hymnal occurs in verse two. The original poem reads, "Jesus, give the weary/Calm and sweet repose..." The Adventist version changes "Jesus" to "Father," thus subliminally reinforcing the belief that the Father, not Jesus, is truly our God.

With two similar editorial changes, the hymn "Standing on the Promises" (text and tune by R. Kelso Carter) diminishes the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Jesus. The song is completely missing from the earlier edition of the Adventist hymnal. The 1985 edition, however, contains the following alterations.

In the original chorus, the text reads: "Standing, standing, standing on the promises of Christ my Savior/standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God."

The Adventist version, however, changes the beginning of the chorus to read thus: "Standing, standing, standing on the promises of God [as opposed to Christ] my Savior." Further, the last of the songs' four stanzas is missing in the Adventist hymnal. It reads:

"Standing on the promises I cannot fall,/ listening every moment to the Spirit's call, resting in my Savior as my all in all, standing on the promises of God."

A final example of the Adventist hymnal's tampering with the orthodox Christian belief about the nature and identity of Jesus occurs in the hymn "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." Written by Samuel Stennett, the text contains seven stanzas. In both editions of the Adventist hymnal, four of the seven are

omitted albeit without significant theological consequences. The real problem, however, is in stanza four (stanza two in the Adventist books). Lines three and four of the original read, "There God the Son forever reigns,/And scatters night away."

In the Adventist books, however, "God the Son" is changed to "Christ the Sun." Because of the homonym Son/Sun, the change would be nearly undetectable if one only heard the words. In reality, however, the Adventist text deliberately refuses to equate "God" with "Son"—not merely in the older edition of the hymnal, but in the currently used book. An antitrinitarian bias is still at work in Adventist doctrines.

Hymns reflect doctrines

It remains for future articles to examine other hymns which Adventists have edited. Some modify or downplay Christ's suffering and His complete atonement for our sins. Others perpetuate the doctrine of soul sleep by eliminating or changing references to meeting God when we die or to saints being present with Him now. Still others remove references to being part of the historic church in order to maintain the illusion that Adventists are the remnant people of God who are called out of the Babylon of apostolic tradition and "apostate Protestantism."

In a time when Adventists are actively promoting themselves as a mainstream evangelical church (without actually adopting evangelical doctrines), their hymnal continues to reveal the truth about the church's beliefs. People remember the words of songs long after they have forgotten the words of specific sermons or doctrinal classes because lyrics are attached to tunes. Because Adventist churches all use the same official hymnal (when they're not branching into praise music), every Adventist is being subliminally taught and reinforced in the truly Adventist beliefs of a modified Jesus, a sanitized atonement, a God who "would never" express wrath, soul sleep, and their own status as God's chosen remnant. Since most Adventists would not be likely to sing the hymns of the faith from any hymnal but their own, they would be unlikely to realize that many of the words they sing every Sabbath are not the words of Christendom in general.

A religion's hymns reflect that religion's distinctive beliefs. Doctrines that might be veiled in a church's public statements and printed material will emerge in its hymnbook. Consequently, it is no mistake that the Adventist church has its own hymnal. If it used a generally available Christian hymnbook, it would be exposing its members to true Biblical Christianity that would conflict with what the church teaches.

Looking back on the songs of our youth, we can say with the psalmist,

"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day." Psalm 96:1-2, NIV

*www.cyberhymnal.org, www.hymnsite.com, www.oremus.org,
www.digitallyhymnal.org, www.cgmusic.com, <http://ingeb.org>

The law fulfilled CONTINUED FROM FRONT

fulfilled in Jesus so that the readers may be led to believe in Him for salvation. Matthew's purpose cannot be contrary to what he heard from the resurrected Christ in the upper room.

As Matthew begins to write chapter five, he remembers the surroundings in which Jesus spoke those words on that day:

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain. And when He had sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying..." (Matt. 5:1).

To the Jewish reader acquainted with the Torah (the five books of Moses), two scenes in their history would come to mind. The first (as found in the Torah) is of Moses going up onto Mount Sinai to receive the Law, the multitude of Israel surrounding the mountain, and the admonition not to climb the mountain (Exodus 19:17-20). The second scene was the pronouncement on Mount Gerizim of the blessings they would receive if they kept that law (Deuteronomy 27-28).

Matthew, however, reverses this order and has Jesus pronounce the blessings before dictating His law. Another contrast with the Old Testament is that in Matthew the people come close to Jesus instead of having to stay away from the Lawgiver as He speaks. Further, in Deuteronomy the blessings are conditional upon the people keeping the law, but Matthew has Jesus pronouncing His blessings upon whoever is there listening to His words.

Further, the last blessing tells on account of whom the blessings would come: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for My sake" (Matt. 5:11). Christ's followers would be

All the blessings arise because of Him, not because of keeping the Law as had been the case in Deuteronomy.

reviled, persecuted, and defamed because of their faith in Him. Yet, because the persecution was on His account, the suffering would become a blessing.

It is Jesus who gives meaning to the blessings. The words "for my sake" are the clue given in v. 11 to understanding the Blessings. All the blessings arise because of Him, not because of keeping the Law as had been the case in Deuteronomy. There are those hearing Jesus who will grasp the meaning of His words because they have faith in Him. Others will feel threatened by His authority and will feel antipathy, resentment, and even murderous hatred against Him (see vs. 20-22).

Those who respond to His authority with faith, however, perceive that He is the key to receiving the blessings. They hear the blessings with this understanding:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" – because He is their kingdom.¹

"Blessed are they that mourn" – because He is their comfort.²

"Blessed are the meek" – because they shall share His inheritance.³

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness" – because He will fill them with His righteousness.⁴

"Blessed are the merciful" – because He is their source of mercy.⁵

"Blessed are the pure in heart" – because clothed with His purity, they shall see God.⁶

"Blessed are the peacemakers" – because through His peace they shall be called the children of God.⁷

"Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness' sake" – because He is their salvation.⁸

"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad" – because He is their reward.⁹

Contrast to the Torah

In contrast, the Jewish listener or reader would have expected, based on the Torah,¹⁰ to hear Jesus say:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" – because they keep the Law.¹¹

"Blessed are they that mourn" – because they keep the Law.¹²

"Blessed are the meek" – because they keep the Law.¹³

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness" – because they keep the Law.¹⁴

"Blessed are the merciful" – because they keep the Law.¹⁵

"Blessed are the pure in heart" – because they keep the Law.¹⁶

"Blessed are the peacemakers" – because they keep the Law.¹⁷

"Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness' sake" – because they keep the Law.¹⁸

"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad" – because they keep the Law.¹⁹

The Jewish reader would have caught the difference between Jesus' words and those of the Torah immediately and would have asked the obvious question, "What about keeping the law as a condition for receiving God's

blessings?"

Jesus addresses this unspoken question in verses 17-20:

(17) "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill. (18) For truly I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. (19) Therefore whoever shall relax one of these commandments, the least, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. (20) For I say to you that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

There are some Christians who see v. 17 as Christ's direct command to keep the Ten Commandments, either as a means of becoming acceptable to God for salvation or as a way to sustain and maintain their salvation with their obedience. Jesus' words

here, however, are not a command to obey the Law. Rather, Jesus' command is, "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets." In order to understand what Jesus means by this command, we will look at the meanings of some of Jesus' specific words in this clause.

First, the word translated "think" is the Greek verb *nomizo*. The synonyms "suppose," "presuppose," "assume," and "consider" all come close to this word's meaning. They do not, however, catch the entire nuance of *nomizo*. The phrase "to make a law" comes close. Therefore, what Jesus is saying in this command is something like this: "Do not make it a law to think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets."²⁰ Jesus knew the Jews listening to Him would assume He was advocating abolishing the Law since the Blessings He listed were not conditioned upon their keeping the Law. He was making sure they knew He was really saying, in effect, "Do not make it your starting assumption about Me that I have come to abolish or undo the Law or the Prophets."

Second, the Greek term used here for "Law" sheds light into Jesus' meaning. It is the Greek *nomos*, which, incidentally, contains the same root as the word *nomizo* discussed in the previous paragraph. *Nomos* refers to the larger corpus of the Law, which the New Testament most clearly translates "Torah," or the five books of Moses which include the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus.²¹ Interestingly, the Jews considered the Day of Atonement (described in Leviticus 16) to be the center of the law, not the Ten Commandments. In fact, if one counts words forward from the beginning of Genesis and counts words backward from the end of Deuteronomy, Leviticus 16 is physically the center of the Law. To the Jews the position of the Day of Atonement in the Torah is no mere coincidence. It shows the centrality and importance of Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—as the center of the Jewish faith.

Jesus' understanding that He was the Lamb of God led Him to interpret the entire Torah as announcing His sacrifice. Therefore, if He had annulled the Law, He would have been annulling the prophetic evidence that He was who He claimed to be, and that by His death He would take the guilt of humanity's disobedience upon Himself. This fulfillment of the law is what He taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus as well as the disciples in the Upper Room.

After Jesus gives the negative command, "Do not make it a law to think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets," He then declares what He has done: "I have not come to destroy but to fulfill." There is no direct command to keep the Law in this statement, either. Rather, Jesus wants us to understand His relationship to the Law so we can then understand our relationship to it.

Further, Jesus refers to the prophets. His implication is that both the Law and the Prophets are of equal value in their foreshadowing of His mission. As He later told the disciples, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that

all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms about Me" (Luke 24:44).

To understand Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets, we must look at the underlying Greek words. The Greek term for "fulfill" is *plero*. It means to fill a container by packing it down until nothing more can be packed in, or until it overflows. Jesus expands the meaning of "filling to overflowing" by the synonym He uses in the following verse, "until all is fulfilled." Here "fulfilled" is not *plero* but a form of the verb *ginomai* which means "to become"—"to come into being through generating."²² The meaning that Jesus gives to "filling to overflowing" is that He will generate whatever is needed to fulfill the requirements of the Law to the point that they are not merely satisfied but that they overflow.

Jesus' claim exceeded all the rabbis' claims to obedience. His claim was that one man could be in Himself the fulfillment and the filling up of all the obedience and righteousness taught, preached, and prophesied in the Torah and the Prophets. It was an astounding claim.

Then, to show how thorough His fulfillment of the Torah and the Prophets would be, He makes another astounding declaration: (18) "For truly I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the Law until all is fulfilled."

The jots and tittles are the smallest parts of the Hebrew character script. Whether they are part of a character or not makes all the difference in the pronunciation and meaning of a word. By

He was making sure they knew He was really saying, in effect, "Do not make it your starting assumption about Me that I have come to abolish or undo the Law or the Prophets".

referring to these figures, Jesus is saying He would both fulfill and fill with meaning every single part of the Torah and the Prophets. Not "till heaven and earth pass away" would the Torah and the Prophets stop demonstrating that Jesus has fulfilled every nuance of meaning and obligation they foreshadowed.

The phrase "until all is fulfilled" cannot be seen apart from the previous phrase "I have not come to destroy but to fulfill." These words of Jesus are talking about much more than the permanency of the Law. They are talking about the eternity of His work in fulfilling the Law on humanity's behalf.

Righteousness exceeding the Pharisees

The following passage is sometimes interpreted as Jesus instructing us to keep the Ten Commandments meticulously. It

must be understood, however, within the context that He is the One who fills the Torah's requirements for righteousness and obedience to the brim.

(19) Therefore whoever shall relax one of these commandments, the least, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.

(20) For I say to you that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

The relaxation, or literally the "loosening," of any of the commandments of the Law (the entire Torah) would call into question whether Jesus is actually the fulfillment of the meaning of that commandment. To say that a particular commandment does not have significance would detract from His mission: to show

His fulfilling of the Torah and the Prophets with all their commandments is now the basis for our new relationship to the Law. Now what matters is our relationship to Him as the One who fulfills the law and fills it up with meaning.

that His life is the fulfillment of even the smallest and seemingly most insignificant commandment.

The doing and teaching of even the least of the commandments must now be seen in the light that He came to fulfill all of them, even the least of them. His fulfilling of the Torah and the Prophets with all their commandments is now the basis for our new relationship to the Law. Now what matters is our relationship to Him as the One who fulfills the law and fills it up with meaning.²³

By His authority as the One who will fill the Law to overflowing, Jesus can now make the following astounding judgment:

"For I say to you that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (v20).

In order to understand this amazing statement, it is important to stay within the context of Jesus' words that he had come to fulfill the Law to overflowing with righteousness. His mission was to surpass the best of human obedience by finally giving the Law what it required: perfect obedience from the heart.

Jesus had already made the connection between Himself and righteousness right there in the Beatitudes. If He Himself were not the righteousness of God provided for humanity, He would have been cursing them instead of blessing them when He said:

(6) Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness! For they shall be filled.

(7) Blessed are the merciful! For they shall obtain mercy.

(8) Blessed are the pure in heart! For they shall see God.

(9) Blessed are the peacemakers! For they shall be called the sons of God.

(10) Blessed are they who have been persecuted for righteousness sake! For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

(11) Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for My sake.

The term "righteousness' sake" in verse 10 is parallel to the phrase "My sake" in verse 11. Jesus is clearly equating Himself with righteousness. He is saying that those who are blessed would find their fulfillment in Him and would also be persecuted on His account. They, like Paul, would suffer for teaching that they would "be found in Him; not having [their] own righteousness, which is of the Law, but through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8-9).

In this passage, Jesus the Christ is announcing His identity and mission as the Messiah, "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5,6). Since He is exceeding the law with His own righteousness, then He has the right to declare what the Law means and how it is applied. Those who contend that Matthew 5:17-19 is a direct reference to and defense of the Decalogue may be surprised at v. 21 where Jesus continues His startling teaching.

"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' "True, the first part is considered the

Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13): "Thou shall not kill". But what about the second part, "Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court...everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell"?

These words are not part of the Ten Commandments at all. In fact, they are not a direct quote of any part of the Torah. This passage is Jesus' own editing of the Torah. As the fulfillment of the Law, His Law goes beyond deeds to the motive behind the deeds. When it comes to murder, the actual deed deserves a day in court. But the anger previous to the deed makes one guilty before "the supreme court." This court in Judaism was none other than the Sanhedrin, and only the very elite scribes and Pharisees were members of that court. Were they angry at Him for lessening the value of their righteousness?

Further, Jesus said if one calls another "You fool!"²⁴ he is guilty of "fiery hell!"²⁵ Hell was a judgment reserved for God alone. Thus Jesus pointed beyond what the Torah could judge to what only God could judge.

Anger and lust tend to keep company, and it was no different in Jesus' audience. How many men (and women) were caught off guard by Jesus' words regarding adultery?

(27) You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not commit adultery." (28) But I say to you that whoever looks on a

woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29) And if your right eye offends you, pluck it out and throw it from you. For it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be thrown into hell. (30) And if your right hand offends you, cut it off and throw it from you. For it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be thrown into hell.

Jesus' "filling up" the meaning of the adultery law surprises his listeners on two accounts: His definition of adultery and its punishment.

Adultery is more than the deed. "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." A conviction of violating the adultery law had grave consequences, literally death by stoning for both (Deuteronomy 22:21-25). Those participating in the stoning had to pick up a stone, or pluck it out from a pile of stones and throw it at the man and the woman until their death. Yet what Jesus asks to be plucked out and thrown is not a stone but the offending lustful eye or the hand used in the sexual fantasy. Moreover, Jesus removes the responsibility of punishment from the public. For the private sin of lust which precedes the more public sin of adultery, Jesus holds the offender fully responsible for his own guilt and for dealing with his sin before God.

Of divorce and oaths

Although not generally seen as connected, Jesus' words regarding lust are closely related to His next pronouncements regarding divorce.

(31) It was also said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce. (32) But I say to you that whoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever shall marry her who is put away commits adultery.

The Torah allowed for a husband to put away the wife if she did not find favor in his eyes because he found some indecency in her. Jesus, however, reissues the divorce commandment so as to fill the Law to overflowing with righteousness. The exception clause for divorce, "except for the cause of fornication," needs to be seen in relationship to the inclusive clause in the case of adultery: "whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." If a man's wife commits adultery, he may divorce her. Jesus allowed for that human situation and its resultant limiting effects on the human heart. In view of His previous clause in which He includes lust of the heart within the scope of adultery, however, He raises the norm for divorce to another level. If a man's wife commits adultery, he may divorce her, but how can he divorce her if in his heart he has ever lusted after other women and is also guilty of adultery?

Even though Jesus allows for divorce, He calls for all to know their sinful hearts and on that basis make the choice to forgive and not divorce. If, however, one does divorce on account of unfaithfulness, divorce with love and forgiveness because "God has called us to live in peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15). Once again, Jesus raises the Law's demand for righteousness to a level that only a higher kind of love can give: His divine love. That love is the Law by which He, as the righteousness of God, relates to sin-

Moreover, Jesus removes the responsibility of punishment from the public. For the private sin of lust which precedes the more public sin of adultery, Jesus holds the offender fully responsible for his own guilt and for dealing with his sin before God.

ners. He is espoused to His people forever. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness" (Jeremiah 31:3).

It is not surprising that, after discussing divorce, the next commandment that Jesus fills with meaning refers to the taking of oaths.

(33) Again, you have heard that it has been said to the ancients, "You shall not swear falsely, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord." (34) But I say to you, Do not swear at all! Not by Heaven, because it is God's throne; (35) not by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; not by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King; (36) nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. (37) But let your word be, Yes, yes; No, no. For whatever is more than these comes from evil.

Initially, two things are striking about this declaration. First, Jesus introduces this command the same way he introduced the previous two by saying, "You have heard that it has been said to the ancients." This command, unlike the previous two, however, is not in the Decalogue. Jesus is showing that He fulfills everything that was written about righteousness and obedience in the Torah and the Prophets.

Second, the commands He presents are not direct quotes from any one specific place in the Torah, but He takes the liberty to "copy and paste" related words and phrases from different parts of the Torah and quote them together. This passage is an example. He uses the idea of the Third Commandment of the Decalogue, "Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11), without quoting it directly. He combines it with Leviticus 19:12, "You shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of your God." The phrase "you shall perform your oaths to the Lord" was understood to be the positive corollary to the negative command not to profane

God's name, but those words were not actually written anywhere in the Torah. Jesus was using His authority as the Righteousness sent from God to reveal the filled-to-overflowing intent and spirit of God's commands regarding oath taking.

Jesus' commandment regarding the taking (or giving) of oaths applies to all human desire to fortify and validate one's promises by calling on the permanence of something greater than one's self. Jesus shows the futility of calling God as witness to the frailty of human promises. Even though the oath taker may not directly be invoking the name of God, Jesus shows that swearing by anything that belongs to God is but a veiled attempt to call on God's sovereignty to guarantee one's inconsistent human promises. God does not guarantee our promises, however; He guarantees only His own.

By reminding the listeners of the frailty of human promises, Jesus reminds His Jewish audience of another failed promise made by their fathers. When God met with the children of Israel to give them His covenant, on their own initiative they swore, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do" (Exodus 19:8). It was a false promise, however, because they swore to do something only He could do: qualify themselves to be His own people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. They swore falsely by attempting to promise something that was His alone to give and to fulfill for His people.²⁶

All they needed to say was "Yes" to His promise.²⁷ Therefore, as Jesus announces the beginning of the New Covenant, He com-

Even though the oath taker may not directly be invoking the name of God, Jesus shows that swearing by anything that belongs to God is but a veiled attempt to call on God's sovereignty to guarantee one's inconsistent human promises. God does not guarantee our promises, however; He guarantees only His own.

mands the believers to just give a simple "Yes" or "No" in all their dealings, including their response to God. Whatever is more than these comes from evil (v. 37). That they knew their promises would come from evil hearts was nothing new to them. They were acquainted with Jeremiah's words, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Only God could swear by His own name. Only His promises were truly faithful. Even the most faithfully kept human promises do not require what God required from Himself: the giving up of

His own beloved son to bear the "rod and stripes" for the transgressions of humanity. In one of the most poignant promises God made to David is found this oath taken by God regarding the work of the Messiah:

(30) If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; (31) If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; (32) Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. (33) Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. (34) My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (35) Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. (36) His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. (37) It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah (Psalms 89:30-37).

God made the promise of the establishment of His throne, and He swore on His own holiness! The right to swear by God's holy name is a right which God reserves to Himself. God's Holy name was at stake if He failed to provide the Son as the Lamb who would bear the sins of the world.

Jesus knew what was at stake when He began His mission. His life and death and resurrection fulfilled the law concerning oaths, demonstrating that it is God's oath to save Israel which should be trusted. Israel's promises failed once, and promises fail every time anyone would swear by God's name to atone for his own sins or to guarantee his own oaths. What is left for humans when they interact with each other is simple honesty in their dealings: "Yes" for "yes," "No" for "no." Anything else is but a cover up for the weaknesses of their promises.

Regrettably, the breaking of human promises often leads to vengeance and violence. Thus, the next commandment that Jesus fills to overflowing is the law concerning how to respond to an injustice. Once again, this is not a commandment found in the Decalogue. Jesus quotes from various parts of the Torah which deal with the law of retribution. In responding to the commandment on His terms, He literally changes the law of retribution to the law of responding to an injustice with love.

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." (39) But I tell you, don't resist him who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. (40) If anyone sues you to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. (41) Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who asks you, and don't turn away him who desires to borrow from you. (Mat 5:38-42)

By changing the commandment from retribution to responding to injustice, Jesus teaches the gospel of His life. He himself is the true meaning of the law. Humanity deserved God's retribution, but God responded with salvation. In Jesus, God turned the other cheek, receiving the unjust and wicked slap of our sins on

His face. In Jesus, God gave humanity the saving robe of righteousness while His son went naked on the cross. In Jesus, God went the second mile, offering His son to become sin for us. In Jesus, God gave to us the gift of eternal life. With His life and His obedience unto death He showed how to respond to all human injustice.

Thus the greater Law of God's love is fulfilled. Jesus ends his discourse by reformulating the law of love. His declaration is a new formula for living—and it is lived out in His life to the fullest.

(43) You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (45) so that you may become sons of your Father in Heaven.

Here Jesus' quote from the Torah is most fascinating. Only the clause "You shall love your neighbor" is part of the Torah (Lev. 19:18). "Hate your enemy" was assumed to be law because it was the opposite of loving the neighbor. Jesus challenged that basic human assumption, however, and established love of the enemy as the corresponding part of loving one's neighbor. Again, Jesus was speaking prophetically of His life.

"For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10). It was Jesus Who, from the cross, blessed those who cursed Him, carried the sins of those who hated Him, and prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" on behalf of His tormentors. This counterintuitive love is our gift from God, and when we are in Christ, it is the love He places in our hearts by His Spirit.

Be perfect in Christ

The culmination of Jesus' reformulation of the Law is contained in the well-known passage, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (v. 48). The word translated here as "perfect" comes from the Greek word *telos* which means "fully completed in its nature or purpose".

The Father trusts in the fully completed righteousness of His Son to represent His love as fully perfect. Similarly, it is only as we trust in the fully completed righteousness of Christ which fills the Law to overflowing that we will be complete in nature and purpose before God.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus introduced Himself as the living Righteousness and Perfection the law had always demanded. In His radical reformulation of the Law, He began to unveil the mystery of His life as the fulfillment of all morality and holiness before God for all time and for all creation. Only He could fulfill the demands for perfection required by the law, and only when we are hidden in Him will we be covered with His righteousness and perfect obedience. Grounded in the assurance that we are fully complete in Him, we can then experience the power of God's perfect love engraving His life into our own.

"Do not make it a law to think that I have come to destroy the law of the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fill to overflowing."

Endnotes

1. Colossians 1:13; Philippians 1:21
2. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
3. Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 1:18-23; Revelation 20:6; 22:5
4. Philippians 3:9; Romans 9:30
5. Ephesians 2:4-8; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 4:16
6. 1 John 3:3; John 15:3-4; Romans 6:22; Hebrews 12:14;
7. Ephesians 2:14-15; John 14:27; 16:33; Romans 8:6-8, 15-17
8. Romans 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 4:8-10
9. Matthew 10:40-42; Colossians 1:26-27
10. Psalm 119:56
11. Psalm 119:20, 21
12. Psalm 119:28, 29.
13. Psalm 119:78, 141
14. Psalm 119:81, 131
15. Psalm 119:77
16. Psalm 119:9-11
17. Psalm 119:163-165
18. Psalm 119:86-88, 157 Note the contrast with Jesus' blessing regarding the persecuted. The psalmist says the persecution is without cause. Jesus says the blessed are persecuted with cause, the cause of righteousness—for His sake and His righteousness.
19. Psalm 119:47, 72
20. *nomizo*: "literally referring to what attains the force of law (*nomos*), and then, 'to be of the opinion'": *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. See also the use of *nomizo* in Mt. 20:10, Lk. 2:44, Acts 7:25, Acts 8:20.
21. Every time the phrase "the Law of Moses" is found in the New Testament, the Greek word *nomos* is used. However, the phrase refers to the Torah as a whole (see Luke 2:22, Luke 24:44, John 1:45, John 7:19, John 7:23, Acts 13:39, Acts 15:5, Acts 28:23, 1 Cor. 9:9, Hebrews 9:19, Hebrews 10:28). In not one instance does the phrase refer exclusively to the Ten Commandments.
22. *ginomai* has many other nuances, but they all arise from the basic meaning "to become" through generating.
23. He will later give an example of the doing and teaching of a small commandment and how He fills it with meaning (vv. 23, 24).
24. The literal word used here is Aramaic, *reqa*, a highly offensive insult, meaning "imbecile" to say the least.
25. A concept found in Jewish apocalyptic literature, Enoch 90:26.
26. Thus the Old Covenant was based upon a false promise. All other attempts of Christians to make similar promises today are promises made under the same false pretenses and are bound for the same failure.

W E B sites of interest

www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

Includes letters, ministry news, free downloads, and access to LAM Publications' online book resource site.

www.SDAoutreach.org

Study materials written by former Adventist pastor J. Mark Martin. Downloadable audio messages are also available.

www.EllenWhite.org

Large collection of information concerning the Seventh-day Adventist prophet and leader Ellen G. White.

www.FormerAdventist.com

Features testimonies of former Adventists, Bible studies, and a discussion forum.

Perspective of a South African expatriot

My soul rejoiced greatly to read the article by Chris Badenhorst, *Proclamation!*, issue 5, volume 5, October 2004. Indeed my soul magnifies the Lord, for we have been led by the Spirit in much the same way. Like him, I am a So. African, but 10 years younger. Like him, I, too, had to work my way through the chaos and confusion that was Adventism. In South Africa, however, we did experience a time when the Gospel glowed upon us. Many fine Afrikaans preachers remembered their Dutch Reformed roots and actually preached the Truth. From this, many of my family benefited, but as by fire. They had to work through the chaos and confusion as well. I heard many of them in their old age say, "It is only for the mercy of God." Grace upon grace.

Afrikaans don't understand the concept. To them salvation was a special form of mercy, which is theologically true, but my aunts had to discover this reality the very hard way of suffering and crying to God, not by good teaching or preaching. I even came to see my late mother understand grace, a fact for which I greatly rejoice.

As a young boy I too listened to Alvin E. Cook and his evangelistic series called *Dead Men Do Tell Tales*. I listened to that twice, saw some families come to Adventism, and have seen many of them suffer grief over the years. As for me, I thought I had it all sewn up. The Adventist system was

enough for me. Little did I know I did not have Christ. Finding Him came much later, and that is another story that I will supply to these pages in the future.

I am a family physician in Thousand Oaks, CA. I live in Simi Valley where the Adventist Media Center is. I see many Adventists come and go. My heart aches for them, for they are defrauded. Colossians 2:18-19, "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from Whom all the body nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God." Cheated and defrauded, they have subjected themselves to regulations (v. 20), and the context phenomenon is verses 16-17, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." When I read this 15 years ago, it was enough for me to dispense of the Adventist chaos. Christ found me, and that has made all the difference.

I am a member of Grace Community Church where Dr. John MacArthur is my pastor. It is through his fine expository preaching that I heard the voice of my great Shepherd, Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep.

I hail you from America, Chris. May the Lord grant us opportunity to meet this side of the Kingdom, perhaps even there in beautiful Durban.

Geoffrey Drew

Please send *Proclamation!*

Could you start sending *Proclamation!* to my son? He likes reading basic Christian, gospel-oriented material. He already knows how cultic the Adventist church is. He went to the local Adventist school for three years and has a lot of Adventist relatives.

My baby grandchild [the child of a different son] attended Sabbath School for the first time in his sweet little life last week. He is not quite two. Please pray that our Heavenly Father will lead this wonderful little boy into righteousness and truth. His twin, a girl, hasn't been exposed to Sabbath School yet. If she gets away from her mama, she cries and weeps. Consequently, they leave her at home with her mama, a lapsed Catholic.

Thank you very much.

Negative things

I am sorry that you write such negative things about the Adventist church. I believe in my church and want to see it through. It's too bad that you seem to dwell on the negative. It would be nice to hear positive encouragement.

A response to Desmond Ford's article

I was raised Adventist. What I have believed is well-stated by "YOUR" magazine in the article by Desmond Ford. Please read the last paragraph of the article entitled, "In Christ Alone, By Grace Alone," *Proclamation!* vol. 5, issue 6, Nov/Dec 2004. p. 17. I am sorry the church took away his credentials. I, however, do believe in the Investigative Judgment (IJ). In fact, I want one. I want "YAWEH" vindicated. Whether the IJ is exactly as E. White depicted it I'm not sure. I do know that Adventists said things about the IJ that E. White never said. The church also printed things she didn't want printed, and her main message was righteousness by faith.

Now re: the plagiarism: God told her He'd show her what to write. The authors she plagiarized should be honored that a prophet used their writings. The fact that she didn't give them credit was a gross error. But none of the prophets were perfect except, maybe, Daniel.

I don't think most of you have been in an Adventist church lately. The righteousness of Christ is being preached from our pulpits. Oh, we still have the Pharisees around; Christ had them around, too, and that probably includes me.

In several of your issues, former Adventist pastors have stated the

Holy Spirit wasn't in the church, so they left. May I say I hope with a heart filled with love, why didn't you preach and pray for it?"

You can't change a community from without; you have to put forth your efforts within. How my heart aches that you left knowing what was needed. My heart also truly aches when I read of both the hate written in the letters to the editors, and of the hate written into your articles. Oh, how Jesus must "weep" over His church.

I pray almost daily that the good things given me by the Spirit be revived and renewed so my church will experience life, joy, and unity.

Editor's Note: The current interpretation of the investigative judgment—that God will be vindicated—shows perhaps even less reverence for God than did the original understanding of the doctrine that stated Jesus is even now judging the righteous, and we will not know whether or not we are saved until the Second Coming. The Bible is clear that God is sovereign over all; none of His creatures will judge Him, nor can they. He owes us no explanations for His sovereign acts (Romans 9:14-26) Neither we nor any other creature can or will "vindicate" God.

As to Ellen White's "main message," righteousness by faith is not the dominant theme in all her writings. While there are some passages that affirm this Biblical truth, many others deny it. Further, her plagiarism, which was a form of stealing, discounts her as a true prophet of God.

If you are happy in your beliefs, why would you feel it necessary to continue to downgrade the church?

My father died a wonderful Christian Adventist man. My mother is 96 and not doing well. She did and does not agree with you. Please do not continue sending your paper to us.

We all need to pray that we will uphold that which is right and ask for God's divine leading and not lean on "our own understanding".

Stop the lies

I have a student who has become a "white supremacist"; we are still his friends, but I will not allow any of his hate-filled literature in my home. We have several students active in the NAACP—they are friends, but their literature is not allowed in my home.

DO NOT send any more of your HATE Seventh-day Adventist and hate Ellen G. White literature to my home. It is offensive to anyone who truly loves the Lord. Jesus is a God of love, not hate.

P.S. I have been in Adventist education for many years and have never heard that we must be perfect to be saved. Salvation is a gift, not earned. So stop the lies.

Personal thanks

Because of your willingness to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we would like to contribute to your ministry. We thank you personally from our heart for all you do. We have learned so much from your materials that you have made available to us. We know that this is not much but we pray that the Lord will multiply it and use it for His purpose. May God bless you and your loved ones!

Enjoyed "The Human Spirit"

Thank you for your ministry. I read your magazine eagerly from cover to cover. It always gives me a fresh perspective and something new to consider. I especially enjoyed Colleen Tinker's article in a recent magazine, "the Human Spirit—Breath or Core Identity?"

Thank you, and may God continue to bless your ministry.

God bless you

May God bless you all for the good work you are doing. Keep it up.

Defamation

Do not send your defamation, ever. I have never read it, nor will I. It is a total waste of trees and materials.

Pray for my girlfriend

I would like to thank you very much for your newsletter *Proclamation!* Also, thank you for recommending me the book *Discovering The New Covenant: Why I Am No Longer a Seventh-day Adventist* by Greg Taylor. Both have been very educational.

Unfortunately I haven't had too much luck witnessing to my girlfriend who is an Adventist. I ask that you please pray for her as well as the members of the Adventist church. I find it very sad that she is being deceived by the fallacy of Adventism.

Thank you and God bless you.

Thanks

Thanks for sharing something about Grace Mail, Calvary [Community Church], and SDA Outreach in this month's issue of *Proclamation!*

It was gracious of you, and we hope together we can continue to reach thousands with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of Calvary, Mark [Martin]

New insight

I would like to say thank you for the brilliant article entitled "The human spirit - breath or core identity?" in the Sept/Oct 2004 *Proclamation!* - it has helped me a lot to understand how to present these things to Adventists, as well as given me a lot of new insight into the issue myself. The part about Jesus' nature was truly excellent!

Reprint article

Just read the Nov-Dec *Proclamation!* I enjoyed all the articles—Dale Ratzlaff's piece on translations was excellent, addressing this controversial issue with clarity in an easy to read style. We would be interested in reprinting it.

Second, I was impressed by the great word picture painted by Cora Holder ("Dumping the Bath Water"). I have quoted her in a column I have written, but because I quote her several times, I would like her permission, as well as yours. I am attaching a rough version of my column—at present scheduled for printing in [our] September-October 2005 [issue].

Keep up the great work!

You take a chance

You take a chance when you send me your paper. I am a sucker for the misinformed. As the beloved Paul said to the Galatians "who has bewitched you?"

You are literate and should know better, but the poorly schooled that are drawn to you are in a pathetic state.

Wake up man and get out of your current dilemma. The law is eternal and will never change. Every true Christian knows that the law is not salvific. But it is the powerful standard of the eternal cosmos.

I have always wondered at you and others of like stripe since I first read your decisions.

What are you hung up on that the rest of us are unaware of? You obviously have nowhere else to go. Are you trying to show us your wounded grievances? Are you hurt? You may join the crowd anytime you choose.

God's answer before I asked!

I was browsing around in Former Adventist Fellowship Forum (FAFF) and found an interesting letter from my cousin with a website to which I went and found that a contributor stated that Walter Rea had recanted his *The White Lie* book and was attending SDA church in Central California

Today we received *Proclamation!* and PTL! There was the answer! I was so thrilled!! This time I got to read the magazine FIRST. My husband usually gets the mail and hogs *Proclamation!* until he's finished with it (we thoroughly read that magazine!), and the answer was right there! To read Rea's steadfast statement in his own words was SPECIAL to me/us!

Somehow there was a set of nine tapes of that GC meeting that got out and our pastor, Joe W. Ray, received a set and he made a copy of them for my husband who was assisting him at the time. We were thoroughly shocked and wept, listening to people we had met talking with Walter Rea as he laid before them his findings during his research and the discussion following!! It was a time of deep turmoil and agony of spirit and mind. I just couldn't believe that Walter Rea would "recant" what the Spirit led him to research.

LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR CLARITY OR SPACE

Mail letters and donations to:

Life Assurance Ministries
PO Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

A parable for a son in the Adventist ministry

PAT DARNELL

The year is 1574; the place is your home in Florence, Italy. The Church in which your mother has brought you up is in a tumultuous dialogue with the scientists of the era over whether the earth is flat (a concept the Church insists is Biblical) and whether the earth is the center around which all the universe rotates (another concept the Church insists is Biblical).

Your intelligent, inquisitive mom watches and listens as the church stigmatizes the great thinker Galileo, just as it did Copernicus and others before him.

Your mom, having been taught by the church that a flat earth is

"Truth is a requisite to a peaceful conscience," she has said.

"truth," has also taught you, her son, that the earth is flat—but with certain reservations.

"God didn't give us our minds for us to turn them over to others. Think for yourself," she has often said.

Your mom listens to the scientists as they make the case that is obvious: the moon is round; the sun is round, and the shadow of the earth on the moon at times of eclipse is round. Therefore, we can expect that the earth is round.

The decibel level of the debate rises, and the Church finally labels Galileo an apostate, deceived, delusional.

Your mom tells you that this "boldness" of Galileo's is enthusiasm, animation for his discovery. Closed-minded people, however, can't see it that way. They call it recklessness or anger.

Most people avoid him. A Church trial is demanded. Your mother has become

increasingly uneasy over the actions of the Church, and finally, this intrepid woman makes an incredible decision. Selling everything that she owns, she buys a little ship and sets out to prove to her satisfaction whether the world is, indeed, round.

"Truth is a requisite to a peaceful conscience," she has said.

Totally consumed in her search for Truth, she sloughs off the accusations of the Church that she is "leaving the truth," "going to the devil," and "reacting to those who have hurt her." She spends more than a decade riding out storms and hurricanes; sweating through the doldrums; fearing for her life in the Straits of Magellan. She fights off pirates and turns away from the sirens trying to seduce her with their chants, "Never question the doctrines and authority of the Church."

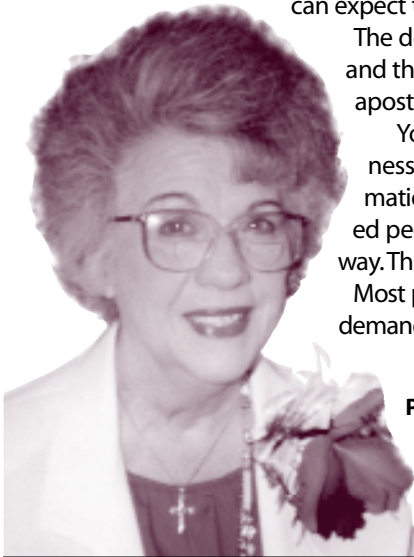
Your mother, however, realizes there is no substitute for Truth. Daily she prays that God will reveal it. Millions of tongues may repeat the mantra, "The earth is flat," but their collective confession doesn't make the dogma true. She knows that there can only be one Truth in this matter; she must not stop or slow her search.

After years of incredible hardship, of worrying about and praying for you back home in Italy surrounded by the Flat Earth Society, she sails her decrepit ship into harbor at last. Older and very tired, she nears the dock. She has put her life and reputation on the line.

She has circumnavigated the globe! She has discovered the Truth—the earth is round! She is ecstatic.

As your mother disembarks, she is anxiously looking in the crowd for you. She is wondering, "Will my beloved son be proud of me? Will his trust in me—for I have never lied to him—be stronger than the fear of the Church's ridicule? Will he dismiss my heartbreaking, difficult journey, or will he appreciate the desire for Truth which drove me? Will he be willing and eager to learn what I have discovered?"

At last she sees you. She searches your face—what will your response be?



Pat Darnell is a retired church musician and music teacher who lives with her husband Dan in Hot Springs, Arkansas. She has four children, seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. In the early 1980's she began to re-evaluate Adventism and discovered a deep chasm between the plain words of Scripture and many of her church's doctrines. Through the teaching experienced at her new job as organist/choir director in a Christian church, she and Dan finally embraced the true gospel of the Lord Jesus.

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