

Christopher Lee: Why we "fight"

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Are other worlds watching us?



Desmond Ford:
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Prayers I didn't know to pray



Worldview shaped without consent

COLLEEN TINKER

One evening in 1999, our recently-formed Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study met, as usual, in the upstairs room assigned to us at Trinity Church. We had invited our pastor Gary Inrig to teach us that night on the subject of “death.” Gary was leading us from text to text, explaining in context what each taught about the subject.

Then he jolted us by referring to Jesus’ transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13), pointing out that Moses, who had died, appeared alive with Jesus and Elijah. Gary’s point was that the spirit of Moses had to have survived the

death of his body in order for him to appear alive on that mountain.

“But Moses was resurrected!” several of us shot back as Gary explained his point.

I’ll never forget the look on Gary’s face. Our pastor, who has large portions of Scripture memorized and who prepares his sermons from the Greek, not the English text, looked completely baffled.

“Where do you get that?” he asked.

“Oh, in Jude 9,” we quickly responded, “where Michael was disputing with the devil about Moses’ body. Michael won, and God resurrected Moses.”

Puzzled by our understanding but confident of his own, Gary replied, “That text does not say Moses was resurrected. It merely says Michael the archangel contended with the devil for Moses’ body. There is no hint of resurrection.”

I remember feeling shock. I had always seen “resurrection” when I read that passage, and for the first time I realized that the text did not suggest resurrection at all. We had read “resurrection” into the text rather than deriving it from the passage.

With embarrassment I admitted, “I think I just stumbled onto another ‘Ellenism.’”

I had thought I had expunged all of Ellen White’s interpretations from my reading of Scripture, but unexpectedly I discovered yet another skew of the plain meaning of the text. I had firmly believed that text taught that Moses was resurrected, and, upon further reflection, I realized that my early belief (derived from EGW’s teaching) that “Michael the Archangel” was another name for

Jesus only solidified my conviction that Jude 9 was describing Jesus contending with the devil for the right to resurrect Moses.

I began to realize that my entire worldview had been shaped by the underlying influence of Ellen White. EGW’s interpretation of Jude 9, for example, confirmed not only that Moses was resurrected but also that Michael the archangel was synonymous with Jesus and that Jesus and Satan are contending with each other. This understanding fit the “Great Controversy theme” EGW taught in her book, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: Jesus and Satan are engaged in an ongoing struggle which will be resolved by “the saved” demonstrating that God is trustworthy and by God proving to Satan that He is fair.*

When I was able to dismiss EGW as having any authority from God to interpret Scripture, the Bible became a new book. I have discovered that God is sovereign over all, even over Satan and evil. He is not proving His “fairness” to Satan and a watching cosmos. God does not answer to us or to Satan; rather, He is the righteous judge of all the earth (Ps. 82:8; 50:6; Heb. 12:23).

I finally realized that even when I had thought I no longer heeded what EGW wrote, her influence underlay every facet of my beliefs and practices. Even though I had given up reading her works, I believed the Bible meant what Adventism, under her influence, had taught it meant. In essence, she had shaped my worldview without my conscious consent.

In this issue Martin Carey examines our Adventist understanding that other worlds are watching us grapple with sin and salvation. Desmond Ford explains the faulty hermeneutics that established the doctrine of the investigative judgment, and Chris Lee explains why Life Assurance Ministries is committed to challenging Adventists to embrace biblical truth. I share my response to a proposal that Christian missionaries use Ellen White to teach Adventists the gospel, and Royce Earp and Cora Holder tell their experiences of God awakening them to truth.

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). We pray that as you read, you will see Jesus. †

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E-mail: **proclamation@gmail.com**

LIFE ASSURANCE
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Whom do I believe

Q. Adventists tell me that Life Assurance Ministries is teaching error and I should not even read *Proclamation!* because it will only confuse me. *Proclamation!* says Adventists are wrong and Ellen White was a false prophet. My Adventist pastor seems sincere. Why should I believe you over my pastor? You both say you are teaching the Bible. How can I know who is right?¹

A. We must separate sincerity and truth. Sincerity is the virtue of speaking truly about one's feelings, thoughts and desires. It has to do with the convictions of the speaker. Truth, however, is based upon facts and has nothing to do with the conviction of the speaker. Truth and sincerity *should* be together, but sincerity does not guarantee truth. I grew up in a home that sincerely believed tea was harmful. My mother was sincere and thought this belief was the truth because Ellen White said so. Now, however, science has proven that both black and green tea are healthful. Studies suggest drinkers of

The first step in the discovery of truth is to receive the One who is Truth as our Savior and Lord.

tea experience a reduced risk of heart attack, less artery disease, less osteoporosis, lower cancer risk, and improved immune function, etc.² Truth is based on fact. One can believe truth, one can believe truth to be error, one can sincerely believe error to be truth, yet truth remains truth. Therefore, one must diligently search out truth separate from sincerity. Jesus said,

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (Jn. 14:6).

The first step in the discovery of truth is to receive the One who is Truth as our Savior and Lord. Then we can claim the promise:

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come (Jn. 16:13).

Some Adventists say, "I go by the Bible alone. If you read your Bible, you will see that Adventism has the truth."

Understanding the Bible requires that we be committed to knowing Jesus and believing God. We cannot perceive the mind of God revealed in His word if we are not made alive by the Holy Spirit. Even before being loyal to the Bible, we must be committed to Jesus Christ and submitted to all He will teach us in His word. Only when we are alive in Christ will we understand spiritual reality.

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ (2 Cor 2:12-16).



Truth is found in the Word of God. "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). In our search for truth, we are to go to the Bible. Jesus said "Scripture cannot be broken." We are to be "truth seekers" and not "opinion provers." We are to seek truth diligently because truth has nothing to fear from careful investigation. Study both sides for yourself and make a commitment to follow truth; it is the only safe thing to do.

Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding (Pro. 23:23).

Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom (Ps. 51:6).

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (Jn. 8:32).

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions (1 Tim. 1:5-7).

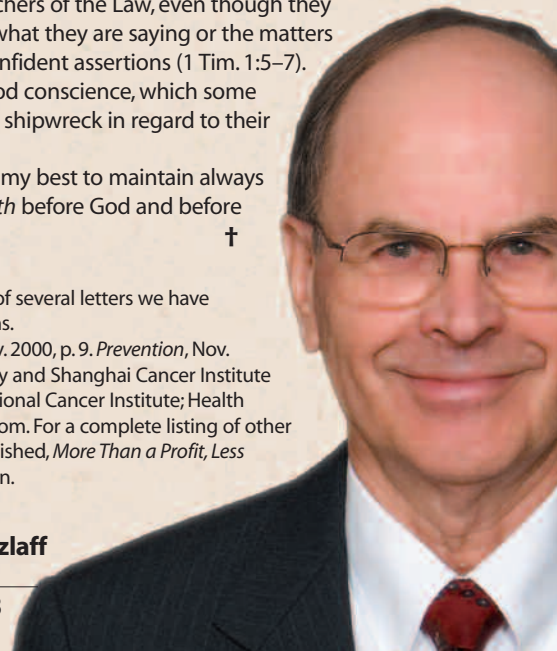
Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith (1 Tim. 1:19).

In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men (Acts 24:16). †

1. This question is a combination of several letters we have received asking similar questions.

2. *Taking Care*, Vol. 22, Issue 11, Nov. 2000, p. 9. *Prevention*, Nov. 2006, p. 149; Columbia University and Shanghai Cancer Institute with participation of the US National Cancer Institute; Health Secrets, July 2004, PhiSciences.com. For a complete listing of other sources see the soon to be published, *More Than a Profit, Less Than a Prophet*, by Dirk Anderson.

Dale Ratzlaff



I found rest in the journey

ROYCE EARP



Be careful what you pray for! Several years ago my wife Karen and I started praying for God to show us truth. We realized it was time to start teaching our children what we believed, so we began a journey to know God. Although we took separate paths on our quest, Karen and I arrived at the same place.

I was a second generation Adventist. Looking back, I am grateful to the Adventist religion because it brought my parents to the same place at the same time. My mother came to Emmanuel Missionary College (now Andrews University) from Puerto Rico, where as a teenager she had been converted to Adventism by SDA missionaries. My father had accepted the Advent message as a teenager, and he, too, headed to Emmanuel Missionary College in Berrien Springs, Michigan. My parents raised four of us children in a very loving home in which our religious life consisted of weekly church attendance and a daily devotional. We did not have Ellen White overtly pushed upon us.

I graduated from Chisholm Trail Academy in Keene, Texas, and from Southern Adventist University in 1984. My religious life was alive but not vibrant; spiritually, I was dead. It was not until it came time to educate my two children that I began to question my beliefs. I home-school my two children, and the

Adventist Home Study International curriculum was *heavy* with indoctrination into Ellen G. White (EGW).

The question

I wanted to know more about her, so I read some of the books she had authored including *The Great Controversy* and *Steps to Christ*. Then at lunch one day, I was telling my father about my EGW questions when he asked me, "Where was Adam when Eve took and ate the fruit?"

I knew the answer Ellen White and the Adventists proclaim, but I realized I didn't know what the Bible said, so I looked it up. Gen. 3:6 says, "...She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

So Adam was *with* Eve? Ellen White said Eve had wandered away from Adam and had thus been vulnerable to the serpent's temptation. I had learned that God had inspired her writings, but Genesis 3:6 contradicted what she said. Now I seriously started questioning who this Ellen White was, and I found there was plenty of information.

The information I found about Ellen White was not flattering to her. I read *White Washed* by Sydney Cleveland, *White Out* by Dirk Anderson, Dale Ratzlaff's books *Sabbath in Christ* and *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, and *A Theologian's*

Journey: from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity by Dr. Jerry Gladson. What I found is that a thoughtful and open-minded person that is intellectually honest must reject Ellen White as a messenger of God.

During this time of study and investigation, God sent a number of different people into my life to teach me about the new covenant. What took place over the next few months was a simple process of God teaching and me learning. I had been praying for an open heart and mind so that whatever God showed me, I would be ready and willing to accept.

The teachers

Now that the student was ready, the teachers came. I had a very good non-Adventist friend, Mike, who had recently become a Christ-follower, and he began to teach me about life apart from the law. Our discussions had begun because I thought it important to teach Mike about the significance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Mike's response marked the first time I heard that Christians do not live by the 10 Commandments but by the influence and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

I taught him everything I knew about the Sabbath using all of the Adventist proof-texts referring to Sabbath-keeping. He tried to teach me that the issue is not about a day of worship but about a relationship with God. I finally gave up trying to convince him of the Sabbath. I still did not grasp his teaching, but I was open to learning.

Then God sent me a life-long family friend. This gentleman, Uncle Ed, had been a devout "Ellen White Adventist," but while he was in his seventies, he had rejected the teachings of EGW and the Adventist religion and had become a new covenant Christian. This transition made quite an impression on me.

Ed was the first person to introduce me to the magazine *Proclamation!* He was very matter-of-fact and taught me about the new covenant using Paul's writings as his textbook, but I never understood which "law" Paul was talking about in his epistles. Then God led me to Sam Pestes' presentations of *The Stone Cutter's Bride*. The picture of the new covenant was gradually becoming clear to me.

Finally, my wife came home telling me about an encounter she had at our YMCA with a preacher's wife while they were next to one another on treadmills. Karen told her new friend her story of growing up in a legalistic religion. The preacher's wife told her that she, too, had grown up in a legalistic religion, and

she had recommended that Karen read Galatians.

Consequently, Karen came home and told me to read Galatians.

I read it over and over. "Where has this book been all of my life?" I wondered.

Galatians

What I read in Galatians changed my life. As an Adventist I had always believed that the commandments had been in place before the earth was made and that we are still under the law. But in Galatians Paul very clearly states that the law was given 430 years after the promise given to Abraham (Gal. 3:17), and he says that the law was put into place until the seed (Jesus) had come (Gal. 3:19). In Gal. 3:19 he even says why the law was put into place; "It was added because of transgression." If Paul were here today he might say, "You foolish Adventists! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ... Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?" (Gal. 3:1-2)

The Adventists teach that the law is separated into ceremonial, civil, and moral laws, and this artificial division is the reason they keep some of the law and not all of it. Once again Paul is very clear about these issues. First, he says in Eph. 2:15 that the law is the commandments and regulations. (...by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations). He does not separate the law into three divisions. Second, he repeats Moses' words in Deuteronomy when he says in Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." So on what authority do Ellen White and the Adventists say that they can decide to keep only part of the law? Jesus does not separate the law; Moses does not separate the law, and Paul does not separate the law. I even did a Bible search on the computer looking for the words ceremonial, civil, and moral followed by the word law. They are non-existent.

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Royce Earp lives in Smyrna, Tennessee with his wife Karen and their sons Cameron and Kendall. He is a graduate of Chisholm Trail Academy in Keene, Texas, and of Southern Adventist College in Collegedale, Tennessee. He has a BS degree in Long-Term Health Care and is currently a stay-at-home dad. Royce home educates his two children, is a member of the Christian Emphasis Committee at the Murfreesboro, Tennessee, YMCA, is a USA Hockey Certified coach and coaches his sons' hockey and soccer teams. He is a member of USA Racquetball and plays competitively, and he is involved in Children's Ministry at World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro.




Cover F E A T U R E

Are other worlds watching us?

MARTIN L. CAREY

...when I accepted the gospel of the New Testament, I realized it was also time to examine my assumptions about the universe that were rooted in Adventist theology—as well as in science as I understood it.



We are so insignificant!" When standing out under a majestic sky full of stars with any group of people, someone always reacts with those words. Insignificance expresses a deep problem in our identity as humans and in how we view our place in the cosmos. When we realize how vast is the universe and how tiny is our earth, we conclude that earth is just a speck. Realizing our speckhood, we assume there must be trillions of intelligent but distant neighbors, many of them our superiors in morality if not intelligence. To believe that we have a unique place of privilege in the cosmos is considered "arrogant." The late Philip Knox, an eloquent Voice of Prophecy speaker and author, stated, "How can any thoughtful person believe that this world, which is such an infinitesimal part of God's colossal universe, is the only abode of life? What manner of conceit is this...?"¹ Likewise, some Christians accept the popular consensus that alien life is virtually certain.

Growing up as an Adventist, I was inspired by the belief in a "watching universe" to pursue the stars passionately. When I looked through a telescope at glories beyond our solar system, I was certain that I was beholding unfallen perfection. As time passed, observing with larger and larger telescopes became a religious duty, a holy quest. However, when I accepted the gospel of the New Testament, I realized it was also time to examine my assumptions about the universe that were rooted in Adventist theology—as well as in science as I understood it.

For Adventists, the existence of intelligent alien life is a deeply held belief founded in great controversy theology and the writings of Ellen White. The great controversy theme (GCT) is a central doctrine of the Adventist church that touches all of its theology as an "organizing principle" and is "Ellen White's distinctive theological contribution."² The theme involves a cosmic conflict "between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe... Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated."³ Ellen White made it clear that the controversy is about God's reputation.

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the Law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.⁴

An essential feature of the GCT is its cosmic scope, involving a vast number of intelligent, unfallen, alien beings observing this controversy. God's character is on trial before all the populated planets, and their inhabitants are the jury. From the beginning of the controversy, these beings have been watching the trial with intense interest. Their involvement elevates the controversy to "great," for without their existence, the boundless cosmic audience for God's character demonstration is removed. Satan's power and importance are reduced if his influence is limited to our "little world."

Secular science also has a strong interest in extra-terrestrial intelligence. The SETI program (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) directs well-funded research and vigorous public relations to keep feeding the popular imagination. Adventists' belief in unfallen intelligences also finds support from secular science and popular culture. Although both Adventist theology and the world at large look to the stars for intelligent life, they do so for very different reasons, as we shall see.

Ellen White's Worlds

Ellen White's earliest visions involved travel to other inhabited planets, and she mentioned them often throughout her lifetime. In late 1846 she "was wrapt in a vision of God's glory, and for the first time had a view of other planets."⁵ These worlds cover the expanse of the universe with "unnumbered millions." She describes beings on one of the planets she saw.

The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes; they were noble, majestic, and lovely. They bore the express image of Jesus, and their countenances beamed with holy joy... I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was, "We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth."⁶

Although both Adventist theology and the world at large look to the stars for intelligent life, they do so for very different reasons, as we shall see.

According to White, they demonstrate that God's rule of law is perpetual and universal, so we who are also in God's image need to be humbled and inspired by their example. "Men living in this little atom of a world are finite; God has unnumbered worlds that are obedient to His laws and are conducted with reference to His glory."⁷

The other worlds are also a battleground, according to GCT. Satan, White wrote, planned to capture the unfallen worlds for his rebellious purposes but has been unsuccessful so far. Since the beginning of the Great Controversy, he has had free access to all the worlds to "tempt and annoy" and create open rebellion against God. God's hesitation was necessary because, "for the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, Satan must more fully develop his principles."⁸ Premature divine justice against the rebellion would only confirm Satan's charges that "the principles of God's government make forgiveness impossible... and his accusations were proven true."⁹ This delay of divine justice was for the benefit of the watching but uncomprehending universe. "Why was it that Satan's existence was not cut short at the outset of his rebellion? It was that the universe might be convinced of God's justice in His dealing with evil."¹⁰ In the Great Controversy, the timing of divine justice has not been in God's control.

Watching Worlds and the Bible

There are a number of Bible passages and phrases that Adventist authors have presented as evidence for the existence of extraterrestrial intelligences, beginning with the Old Testament.

The Sons of God, *beney elohim*, *beney ha'elohim*, or *beney elim*, are found in Genesis 6:2, 6:4, in Deuteronomy 32:8 (some manuscripts), in Psalms 29:1, 89:5, as well as in three texts in Job: 1:6, 2:1, and 38:7. They are not defined but are variously translated as "angels," "mighty ones," "sons of the mighty,"

"assembly of the holy ones," or just "holy ones." In the first two chapters of Job, the sons of God present themselves before the Lord on two occasions, and Satan is among them both times. In 38:7, they shout for joy at the creation of our world. Knox wrote that 1:6 and 2:1 describe a counsel meeting of the worlds, that the Sons of God are representatives from those worlds, and that Adam might have been a member of this counsel but for his fall.¹¹

Knox's interpretation is an imaginative use of Scripture, for there is no indication in these passages that the sons of God are anything exotic. Satan was a fallen angel who was permitted to appear before the Lord with other angels, as he had always done. We know he was permitted because he had access to God's presence on other occasions as well (Zech. 3:2 and Luke 10:18).

If the sons of God in the Old Testament are angels, we can make better sense of all the references to them. Knox's alien beings get into trouble in Genesis 6:6, where "... the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them." White finds a more mundane identity for the Genesis beings, and states that the children of Seth who worshipped God intermarried with the worldly children of Cain.¹² Probably most biblical scholars also believe the Genesis sons of God to be the sons of Seth;¹³ others hold that they were fallen angels,¹⁴ or that this was a general term for worshippers of God. There are arguments for each view, but the Christian commentaries don't see the sons of God as physical beings from other worlds.

Other passages with sons of God also appear to describe angels. Deuteronomy 32:8 has an enigmatic statement in some translations, "... he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God." Again, this is not likely a reference to residents of distant planets. We know that elsewhere in scripture angels with authority are called princes, principalities, authorities, powers, or rulers, as in Daniel 10 where Gabriel contends with the prince of Persia. In Daniel 3:25, the being who accompanied Daniel's three friends in the furnace resembled a "son of the gods" and was later called an angel by king Nebuchadnezzar.

In the New Testament, the term "sons of God" very plainly refers to believers, since their new life created by the Spirit has no physical genealogy. In fact, in Luke 20:36, Jesus describes how humans in the life of the age to come "... neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are *sons of God*, being sons of the resurrection." (NKJV). Lewis Chafer wrote that in the Old Testament terminology, angels are called sons of God while men are called servants of God. In the New Testament this identification is reversed. Angels are the servants and Christians are the sons of God.¹⁵

E.W. Bullinger draws together all the "sons of God" texts in both testaments:

It is only by the Divine specific act of creation that any created being can be called "a son of God." For that which is "born of the flesh is flesh." God is spirit and that which is "born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Hence Adam is called a "son of God" in

Luke 3:38. Those “in Christ” having the “new nature” which is by the direct creation of God (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10) can be, and are called “sons of God” (John 1:13; Rom. 8:14, 15; 1 John 3:1).¹⁶

The Bible is clear that God created other worlds. Heb. 1:2 states “...by whom also he made the worlds...” while Heb 11:3 says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed.” Other translations have “universe” instead of “worlds.” What is meant here? In our culture we are conditioned to associate “worlds” with planets, and we imagine a terrestrial planet like ours with people like us. However, the Greek, *aion*, can be translated as forever, worlds, universe, period of time, or age.¹⁷ It is a general term that can include the entire creation, and it does not specifically address planets or people living on them.

“**Things in Heaven**”, mentioned in Colossians 1:19-20, speaks of something otherworldly accomplished by Christ:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

A. Graham Maxwell, the theologian who taught the GCT at Loma Linda University for nearly three decades, used this text as evidence for a watching universe¹⁸ and a Great Controversy. Actually, this text raises a good question: why would unfallen creation need reconciliation and peace through Christ?

Building up a Great Controversy is not needed to make sense of this text. Romans 8:20-22 states that the whole creation, and that includes everything God has made in the entire cosmos, “was subjected to frustration” and “bondage to decay,” and “has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” All of the universe has been traumatized and continues to suffer. There is nothing in the universe that has not been affected by sin and death in some way, including the unfallen angels. Since they have suffered with us in some sense, they need reconciliation, freedom, and peace as well.

Sin introduced discord not only on earth, but also in heaven, by the fall of demons; it brought into the abodes of holy angels, though not positive, yet privative loss, a retardation of their highest and most perfect development... Angels were no more able than men by themselves to overcome the peace disturbers, and cast out the devils; it is only “by,” or “through Him,” and “the blood of His cross,” that peace was restored even in heaven.¹⁹

Principalities and Powers (Eph. 3:10) have also been cited as examples of unfallen beings on other worlds, but how are they mentioned in other passages?

In Romans 8:38, they are entities who might attempt to separate us from the love of Christ. In Eph. 1:21 and Col. 1:16, 2:10, they are rulers in the heavens over whom Christ is given dominion. They are disarmed and publicly humiliated in Col. 2:15. In Eph. 6:12, they are evil spiritual powers against whom we struggle. Titus is told (3:1) to remind the people to submit to human rulers and authorities. None of these are good candidates for physical beings from other worlds, as Maxwell and others claim. They are either powerful angels, evil in most cases, or they are human authorities, depending on context.

While the Bible does not explicitly deny the existence of aliens, inhabitants of worlds are not discussed anywhere in scripture.

The Starry Allotment

The stars overwhelm us with their numbers and distances as we gaze at them with awe. Stars are huge, distant, and numerous, perhaps 100 billion squared. They are unimaginably powerful furnaces of nuclear fusion. The Israelites were warned of the very human reaction to worship them:

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has *allotted to all the peoples* (emphasis mine) under the whole heaven (Deut. 4:19, ESV).

The heavens can declare God’s glory, or they can draw us away from him so that we bow to them and serve them. In Psalms 8 David says of man, “You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.” The stars are a gift to all of us *under heaven*.

Multiplying Worlds: A Brief History

When Copernicus launched his book *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* in 1543, showing that the earth orbited the sun, the Christian world began to rethink its cosmology. The church’s adoption of Aristotle’s ideas blended with classical Christian doctrine to put an unmovable earth at the center of the universe, with all the celestial spheres revolving about it. Humans had a central place as the special objects of God’s creative and saving activity. Some theological minds, however, questioned this orthodoxy.²⁰

Basing his opinion on Augustine’s idea that God could have made a perfect man, William of Ockham, the fourteenth-century Oxford Franciscan, declared it probable that God could create a better world than ours, and certain that he could create an infinite number of worlds identical to ours.²¹

Giordano Bruno was a Dominican monk who was inspired by the Greek philosophers Democritus and Epicurus and departed from the cardinal points of Christian theology. Since he embraced the idea that all things are composed of irreducible, eternal particles called atoms, he reasoned that there must be an infinity of stars and planets that are inhabited by beings like us. “Bruno believed that God’s omnipotence and infinitude could only be expressed by creating an infinite number of worlds in reality, not just as a hypothetical possibility.”²² Bruno was burned at the stake for a number of heresies, including pantheism.

All of the universe has been traumatized and continues to suffer. There is nothing in the universe that has not been affected by sin and death in some way, including the unfallen angels.

The invention of the telescope accelerated this expansion of the creation. Galileo's discoveries of actual worlds and their motions dealt a fatal blow to earth-centered cosmology. Galileo, however, was cautious in speculating about life on other worlds, unlike many other luminaries of science such as Kepler who wrote that God specifically created Jupiter's moons for the benefit of the Jovian inhabitants. Fontenelle's successful book *The Plurality of Worlds* looked away from tiny earth to the realms of populated space to which theology and science should shift their attention. Fontenelle argued one case as a lawyer, and then gave his life to writing on philosophy and science. Here he expresses his forlorn mood out under the Tremendum:

Behold a universe so immense that I am lost in it. I no longer know where I am. I am just nothing at all. Our world is terrifying in its insignificance.²³

Over the next hundred years, pluralism came to be the dominant viewpoint among the thinking class. Astronomers William and his son John Herschel believed that not only are other planets inhabited with intelligent beings, but so also are the moon, the sun, and the stars. Their superlative observing skills enabled them to discern that the "spiral nebulae" were

possibly separate systems of stars, or "island universes." Emmanuel Kant, the German philosopher, wrote extensively in the late 18th century about worlds ever filling more space in a "continuous extension of the Divine presence."²⁴ There were notable exceptions to these opinions, such as William Whewell, an early proponent of the "rare earth" hypothesis, who argued brilliantly from science that the conditions for life are not common in the universe.

Many Christian contemporaries of Ellen White spoke freely of many worlds, including Charles Spurgeon and R.W. Dickinson. Spurgeon, just before his death, urged that if Christians are given to be evangelists in the next life, they will carry the story of the cross to every world.²⁵ Before Ellen White wrote

The Great Controversy, its major ideas were discussed. In 1848, Dickinson anticipated *The Great Controversy* with a cosmic saga reminiscent of Ellen White's grand theme, in which the angels and other worlds required a demonstration of the effects of Satan's deceptions and God's justice. Dickinson sees God driven by "moral necessity" to a practical demonstration of His goodness. Satan was allowed access to other worlds because,

...it may have been in order to refute the assumption on which Satan proceeded in his revolt, and demonstrated to the

universe God's ability to exercise a wise, just, and benevolent administration over creatures who revolt.²⁶

Cosmic pluralism, however, did not only grow out of the Copernican revolution and the discoveries of the telescope. For many believers it was also shaped by the conviction that undue concern for earth somehow diminishes God's greatness.

Mediocrity vs. Privilege

A most cherished doctrine of modern astronomy is called the "mediocrity principle," which assumes that earth has no special place in the cosmos, that we are just a typical rocky planet, orbiting an ordinary star, circling inside a conventional barred spiral galaxy.²⁷ Among mediocrity's most devout was astronomer Carl Sagan. In a photo of earth he finds proof for dogmatic atheism and despair:

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena...Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark...there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.²⁸

So if earths are common, then other peopled-planets shouldn't be hard to find. In 1950, the physicist Enrico Fermi asked his friends around the lunch table, "Where is everybody?" If our galaxy is teeming with life and civilizations, he wondered, why don't we see or hear from them? They've had plenty of time to evolve and make contact. This question became known as the Fermi Paradox, and it evades an easy answer from even the most fervent SETI enthusiasts.²⁹

But they have to be out there. Percival Lowell of Martian canals fame had no doubts:

"That we are the sum and substance of the capabilities of the cosmos is something so preposterous as to be exquisitely comic...[Man] merely typifies in an imperfect way what is going on elsewhere, and what, to a mathematical certainty, is in some corners of the cosmos indefinitely excelled."³⁰

Sagan, Fermi, and Lowell all assumed that life originated only by the interactions of matter and energy, with no help from an intelligent agent. For mainstream science, a cosmos filled with alien intelligences is a natural outgrowth of Darwinian processes. Life's recipe is simple; just add water, simmer for a few million years, and out pops life. Given enough time, dead matter will self-organize, and random variation and natural selection may eventually produce intelligence.

In 1961 Frank Drake developed the Drake Equation that attempts to quantify the factors that determine the number of intelligent, communicating civilizations in our galaxy.³¹ Formulas give the appearance of rigor and legitimacy. Unfortunately, none of the Drake factors are known with any accuracy. We do not know how many stars have planets, or what portion of those planets can sustain life. Depending on the numbers one feels like plugging into the formula, the answer could be either billions or zero. With better technology, perhaps we could learn the numbers of planets in our galaxy,

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but detecting life would be a greater challenge by unknown orders of magnitude. With only seven factors, one is led to believe that the conditions for life are few and simple. Even worse, there is no satisfactory naturalistic explanation for the origin of life. How can scientists calculate life's chances elsewhere if they can only speculate on its origin here?

Nevertheless, SETI, NASA, our government, and much of academia have a large stake in hunting for ET; they hope that an advanced civilization can provide answers for longevity, peace, and prosperity. There is a large measure of faith involved in this quest as they hope for the smallest sign from some nameless, silent entity far away. As novelist Michael Crichton told his CalTech audience in 2003, SETI is not science; it is a religion.³²

On the other hand, there are scientists who will pursue the evidence where it leads. Guillermo Gonzalez, a well-published astronomer at Iowa State University, has shown independence in his support for intelligent design, a stance probably costing him tenure. He has stimulated much controversy with his work on "habitability zones" which describe the ability of a planet, star system, or galaxy to support life. Gonzalez has compiled an impressive list of factors that must be right for life to flourish. Says Gonzalez,

Complex life in particular probably needs many of the things that we Earthlings enjoy: a rocky terrestrial planet similar in size and composition to the Earth, with plate tectonics to recycle nutrients, and the right kind of atmosphere; a large, well placed moon to contribute to tides and stabilize the tilt of the planet's axis. That planet needs to be just the right distance from the right kind of single star, in a nearly circular orbit—to maintain liquid water on its surface.³³

Having the right kind of star also depends on our position in the galaxy. He estimates that at best, 5% of the stars in our galaxy lie within its habitable zone. Our sun, for example, has a nearly circular orbit around the center of the galaxy, keeping it in that zone. If we were too close to the central bulge, we would be exposed to fatal doses of radiation. If too far out, our star would lack the heavy elements needed for life's chemistry. These are only a small sample of the hundreds of known conditions needed to sustain life. Outside these conditions, space is catastrophically hostile.

The Drake Equation has been answered with a Rare Earth Equation with habitability requirements, and it doesn't attempt to calculate the number of communicating intelligences. Some critics, however, complain that the Rare Earth Equation definition of life is too narrow. Life, they argue, should not be limited to just carbon-and-water-based varieties. This objection, though, is pure speculation. No one has a clear idea of either the chemistry or the biology of alternative life forms. We have just one data point: ourselves. We are the only intelligences we have met, and there is no credible evidence that anyone has ever contacted an ET.

So, where are they? I believe the answer rests on both non-prejudiced science and a sober reading of the Bible. Earth is truly a privileged planet.

Futility vs. Hope

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:20,21).

From one end of the universe to the other, we see decay. The most distant galaxies are as much in bondage to decay as our bodies are. We groan and suffer, and so do the stars. Dying stars are beautiful as planetary nebulae, but when close to us, death is horrific.

Here we learn that death is much more than just a natural consequence of violating law. The futility of death we share with each other, our pets, and the stars, "is because of him who subjected [creation]." In a sermon based on Romans 8, John Piper points out that God did not passively let go of the natural order; he subjected it to decay by active decree. Our groaning isn't merely a natural state but results from a judicial act.³⁴ This understanding is a departure from *The Great Controversy's* universe where decay is merely a natural result of law-breaking. The Bible, however, explains that because of sin, natural law was changed by God's decree. The futility of death is under God's control, so we have certain hope.

Our Significance

When we look at the greatness of the stars and consider how small, weak, and self-destructive we are, it is difficult to believe that we are anything special. It is outrageous to believe that humans are the only living things created in the image of God.

It is even more outrageous to believe that the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.³⁵ He did not come to

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protect his significance before all the “watching worlds.” He did not come to save anyone else—only the lost. He cared nothing for reputation and became forever human.³⁶ Great Controversy theology portrays a hesitating, self-protecting, political God, watching his cosmic popularity polls. For Jesus, however, reputation was not something to be grasped but emptied out to the dregs. His love goes beyond anything reasonable. He’s a wild, insanely reckless, romantic lover who came to rescue us from the dominion of darkness. That is why He is supreme, and that is why we love Him.

Did God reduce himself by creating only one populated planet and then giving all to save it? Of course he did! He so loved our world, “He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God has exalted him to the highest place.”³⁷ Jesus Christ has supremacy over all, and we are heirs with him, by divine decree. So how will the Father “not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”³⁸ In him, we inherit everything.

The universe was made for man, not man for the universe.³⁹ We find our significance in the one “who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.”⁴⁰ †

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Martin Carey grew up as an Adventist in many different places, including Washington D.C., Missouri, and Guam, USA. During daylight hours he works as a psychologist for a high school in San Bernardino, California. He is also a licensed family therapist. He is married to Sharon, and has two sons, Matthew, 6, and Nick, 20. He continues to search for clear, dark skies with seven different telescopes up to 20". The study of intelligent design takes up his remaining energy. You may contact him at martincarey@sbcglobal.net.



PHOTO BY SHARON CAREY

In the mouth of two or three witnesses
every word must be established.

Doctrine determined by faulty hermeneutics

Desmond Ford



In 1980 Dr. Desmond Ford made Adventist headlines when he presented his research on the subject of the investigative judgment before a group of Adventist leaders and scholars at Glacier View, Colorado. He demonstrated that this central Adventist doctrine was based on an incorrect interpretation of Daniel 8:14, and it cannot withstand the scrutiny of Scripture and the meanings of the original Hebrew words. As a result of Ford's presentation, he was removed from the Adventist ministry, and in the following months many Adventist pastors and teachers of theology who sympathized with Ford's findings also lost their jobs. Today the church still endorses the original doctrine, but it tolerates a variety of creative interpretations and applications of it.

The great embarrassment for Adventists for over 160 years is that the investigative judgment doctrine is an inverted pyramid pivoting on one text—Daniel 8:14. Yet seven times Scripture tells us that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word must be established.

Of course, it must be admitted that William Miller had fifteen “proofs” for arriving at his date of 1844, but the Adventist church never prints 14 of those as they would make the situation even more embarrassing. No one today accepts them because they are ludicrous. This is not a poke at Miller; nobody is good at everything, and for Miller—math was just not his strong point. His other key weakness was exegesis. Not knowing the original languages of the Bible made it difficult for him to check his hunches.

Kai Arasola in *The End of Historicism* lists all of Miller's 15 routes to 1844¹ but without enthusiasm. He indicates that nobody today accepts 14 of them, and scholars in general reject all 15.

The one Miller argument the church retains deals with Daniel 8:14, and it defies the original Hebrew which speaks about, not days, but evening-mornings. Miller said the terms

were connected to Genesis 1 where the evenings and the mornings marked each day of creation, but the Hebrew in Genesis 1 is different from the Hebrew terms in Daniel 8:14. The terms in Daniel are not like Genesis but are the same as the terms in the Mosaic law about evening and morning sacrifices. One earnest Seventh-day Adventist over 20 years ago wrote key theologians in the top seminaries and universities of USA, trying to persuade them of the typical Adventist understanding of Daniel 8:14. Most of the theologians stressed the point in their replies that ‘days’ are not in the Hebrew of Daniel 8:14. Let me quote one response:

Dear Mr. Lynch, You have been misinformed “that the only correct translation of Dan 8:14 is ‘until 2,300 days.’” The Hebrew phrase can only mean ‘For 2,300 evenings and mornings,’ which equals 1,150 days. I know of no one who translates the phrase 2,300 days. Genesis 1 is not relevant to this phrase.... the reference is to the 1,150 evening and 1,150 morning sacrifices.... (Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M., The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C. Dept. of Biblical Studies).

Scholars from Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Chicago Theological Seminary, Andover Newton Theological School, and Johns

The terms in Daniel are not like Genesis but are the same as the terms in the Mosaic law about evening and morning sacrifices.

Hopkins University replied to Brian Lynch similarly. I have the letters before me as I write.

“Year-day principle” and defilement

To make the situation more difficult still, the word ‘weeks’ is not in the original Hebrew of Daniel 9:24. The Hebrew word is a plural masculine, which is never used for the seven-day week. (See the *New International Version*.) The term just means a *heptad*—a seven of something, just as ‘dozen’ means 12 of something, and ‘score’ means 20 of something. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC) in its revised edition stressed that there is no year-day principle here.

But back to Daniel 8:14. Not only are ‘days’ missing from the Hebrew text but also ‘cleansed’ is missing, as most modern translations make clear. The actual Hebrew term here means ‘vindicate’ or ‘justify’ and is never found in Leviticus 16 in connection with the Day of Atonement ritual.

The embarrassment increases even more when we take into account the context which describes a nasty little horn—not the sins of God’s people—defiling the sanctuary. It is therefore the defilement of the little horn—Antichrist—that demands vindication for the holy temple. This little horn (Antichrist) is also in view in Daniel 7 where the text says that the judgment shall sit and ‘take away his dominion’. (See Daniel 7:26.)

The *SDA Bible Dictionary* in its article on the ‘little horn’ stresses this very point. It’s not the sins of the saints that are to be cleansed away, but the wickedness of the little horn is to be rectified and the sanctuary restored or vindicated.

One very important point almost always overlooked by Seventh-day Adventists is that the next chapter interprets the symbolism of Daniel 8:14 by the plain language of 9:24. This later verse and its associated verses complete Gabriel’s explanation of the symbols of the vision of chapter 8 and clarify that Daniel 8:14 is not referring to literal days, nor is there any year-for-a-day principle in view. Similarly, the next prophetic chain sheds further light upon the true meaning of Daniel 8, so that in Daniel 12:1-3 we have an enlargement of 9:24 again, using the key word ‘righteousness’.

We rightly protest when the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Mormons ignore the context of a verse of Scripture. But to be honest should we not look within before we look without? Both these cults come up with all kinds of doctrinal monstrosities by misusing isolated Scripture verses, and their critics have joyfully or sadly (depending on the critic) pointed this out.

Hermeneutics are key

The fact that individuals and groups interpret the Bible so differently is not the fault of the Scriptures, but the fault of the hermeneutic being employed in each case. Are there some clear rules which can give us a safe hermeneutic and lead to the discovery of truth rather than error? I believe there are such.

1. Essential truth is never esoteric—it is plain and simple. Jesus warned against the multiplying of words, for “in the abundance of words there lacketh not sin” (Proverbs 10:19). He said: “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37).

Even in Old Testament times God promised that neither a wayfaring man nor a fool need err in determining the truth (Isaiah 35:8). Christ admonished Peter to feed the lambs of the flock. Truth is of such a nature that it is relished by ‘lambs’ and nourishes them. Even children understood Jesus. It has often been drawn to our attention that the things that trouble us are not the things in the Bible which we cannot understand, but the things we understand only too well but fail to follow; for example, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

2. Essential truth glorifies Jesus and centers in him. See 2 Timothy 3:15 and John 20:31. Salvation is “through faith in Christ Jesus.” Concerning the Scriptures, Jesus said, “they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Paul was determined to know nothing “except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified. . . .” (1 Cor 2:2; 1:22,23).

Our Lord himself admonished his disciples to look no further than himself for what they sought, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Saving truth glories in the incarnation, the sinless life, atoning death, and the glorious resurrection and ascension of our Lord as well as in His priestly ministry, His second advent, and His final judgment of all men. All of these things are clear and explicit in the New Testament. No one need doubt them, and none need dispute them in their essence.

3. Essential truth never rests upon a single verse. Some have said that the Trinity has little to support it in Scripture, but any who study the array of New Testament passages offered by such scholars as Bickersteth (*The Trinity*) will find this not to be the case. Every fundamental truth of Scripture is oft repeated. The God who multiplied dreams to Joseph and to Daniel, repeating to each in several ways the same truths, has ever behaved thus with his church. Thus we have four Gospels setting forth the life and atoning death of our Lord.

The fact that we are saved through faith in Christ’s sacrifice and that such faith always produces holy works is stated over and over in the New Testament. Who that reads Scripture can doubt that faith, hope, and love characterize all true followers of the Lamb of God? Are not even the secondary duties of baptism and participation in the Lord’s Supper clearly and repeatedly mentioned? No vital truth rests upon a single passage of Scripture. When some wish to use I Corinthians 15:29 to establish proxy baptism, or Daniel 8:14 to prove the theological significance of a date in our Western calendars, or the parabolic illustration of Luke 17:34 to prove the secret rapture, we have every right to courteously differ.

4. Saving truth, essential truth, is found in Scripture alone. Those who wish to turn a doctrine based in Daniel

When did Christ or the Apostles ever use anything other than Scripture to demonstrate an essential doctrine?

8:14 or other isolated texts into a test of fellowship are forced to go beyond Scripture, and even then to no avail. They may invoke Ptolemy's *Canon*, the Elephantine papyri, and other extra-biblical materials to bolster their case, but thereby they automatically destroy it. When did Christ or the Apostles ever use anything other than Scripture to demonstrate an essential doctrine?

This is the weakness of any interpretation of prophecy that is purely of the historicist school. When one surveys the multitude of varying interpretations of apocalyptic passages found in the writing of historicists, one might well despair of finding truth. But the error lies in the method. While historicists have done well to remind the church that prophecy is ever pertinent to the pilgrimage of the believers in every age, it strayed when it forgot that Scripture was initially addressed to the needs of its first recipients and applies to later ages by way of principle rather than in connection with dates and places. To try to interpret the book of Revelation by using the history of the unbeliever Edward Gibbon or the records of the French Revolution and other European upheavals is to depart drastically from the method of Christ and the Apostles.

The Christian creed should revolve around the centrality of the greatest verse in the Bible—John 3:16. It should major in the Christ event, particularly his atonement on the cross. It will stress salvation by faith alone, yet pointing out that true faith is never alone, for though sanctification is distinct from justification, it is never separate.

The true creed will make central, not the minutiae of “mint, anise, and cumin,” but the weightier matters of the law, “righteousness, mercy, faith.” When Paul said: “Now these three remain: faith, hope and love,” he was merely explicating John 3:16 which speaks of all three—God so loved, that whosoever believeth, may have everlasting life. Other truths implicit in the same key verse include the plurality of the Godhead (the Trinity of the God who gave, God the Son who died, and God the Spirit who creates faith through the Word he inspired), life only in Christ, Judgment, the Second Advent, and the new earth (when we will realize fully our eternal life.)

Because Scripture and only Scripture gives the right view of all these things, the Christian creed will set forth the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. Because of the ‘whosoever’ in John 3:16 the priesthood of all believers must also be affirmed. And because the giving of God’s only Son was the solution for sin, moral absolutes must be upheld as the fruit of

living by the power of the Spirit (see Romans 8) who always points us to the Lamb of God. While Calvary will be shown as leading to Pentecost, the same creed will emphasize that Pentecost always leads back to Calvary.

Inevitable controversy

These four principles should guide all hermeneutics and every group professing Christ. But doing so will lead to inevitable controversy as it did for Paul. A well-known public relations consultant Rene Alexenko Evans wrote an unusual article for *The Adventist Review* some years ago entitled ‘If the Truth Be Told’. It recorded the struggles of one believer to find the truth from her own church—Adventism. We quote:

I’m an Internet junkie with a reporter’s curiosity, so I headed for my computer. What popped up on my screen shocked a good girl like me who was raised in a spotless-on-Friday-night, memory-verse-learned-every-week, Seventh-day Adventist home. Not even my degree from an Adventist university prepared me for the frontal assault on what I had always held as truth.... so I started asking questions on an official church Internet forum.

Within a week my messages had been deleted, and I had been locked out.... the pursuit of truth can be an unpleasant business.... As Seventh-day Adventists we pride ourselves on having it and preaching it. Problem is, we don’t always want to tell it....

‘A lie,’ said Winston Churchill, ‘gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.’ But that was before the Internet and instantaneous global communication. Today truth has a fighting chance—provided, of course, we actually want it told.²

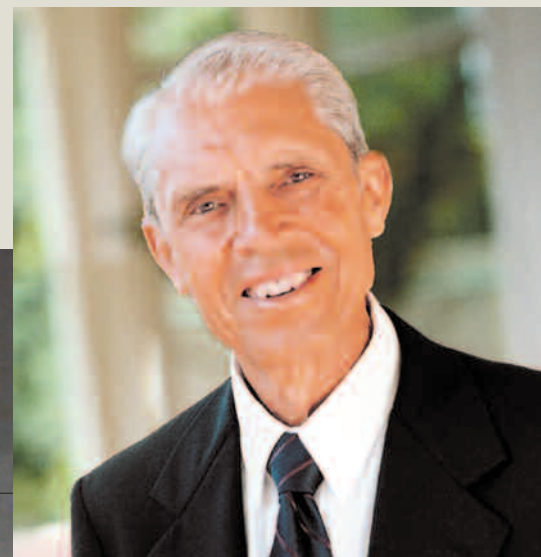
We congratulate Ms. Evans for her courageous article, and we also congratulate the editors of the *Review* for printing it. Perhaps they sympathized.

Most of what has here been written is “old hat.” But did not Jesus say, “It is not for you to know the times or dates....” (Acts 1:7)? All we need to know is recorded in Scripture. We must live by Jesus’ words: “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them” (John 13:17). †

Endnotes

1. Also printed in Ratzlaff, Dale, *Cultic Doctrine*, p. 51-81.
2. *Adventist Review*, Evans, Rene Alexenko, “If the truth be told,” July 29, 1999, p. 48-49, 51-54

Dr. Desmond Ford (Phd Michigan State, USA) (Phd Manchester, England) is the author of over 20 books on subjects ranging from theology to health and lifestyle. After many years teaching theology, culminating at the Glacier View meeting, Dr. Ford founded Good News Unlimited, giving seminars internationally. He returned to Australia in 2000 with his wife Gillian. Des speaks regularly in Brisbane and Sydney at various churches and non-denominational organizations. He has three adult children. Des and Gillian are sabbatarians.



Can the messenger taint the truth?

Right message, Wrong messenger

COLLEEN TINKER

A few months ago we received a letter asking an important question. The question came from a ministry that supports several overseas missions, most of which operate in areas where there is significant Seventh-day Adventist presence: what did we think about a gospel presentation using Ellen White (EGW) quotations to teach Adventists how to be saved?

Realizing that many Adventists he encountered did not understand the biblical gospel, one of the mission directors had developed a method for presenting the gospel to Adventists using quotations from various EGW sources. By carefully selecting some of EGW's most gospel-sounding quotes, he was able to enlarge and elaborate on her words, explaining from his perspective what he thought she meant and why he thought she made those statements. The result was a presentation of the gospel using EGW as the "gospel teacher".

Old reactions

As I read the presentation the missionary had developed, I felt myself being pulled back into old reactions I hadn't experienced in over a decade. I had to force myself to stay focused, to follow the lines of reasoning from one EGW quote to the next.

Deliberately I evaluated the sentences and paragraphs. Indeed, the author of the paper was presenting the gospel. His choices of EGW quotes were careful. He used only the best, the most gospel-accurate statements from a variety of sources, yet I was not impacted by the power and mystery of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. I was not compelled to worship and honor the Lord Jesus. Instead, I felt that old discouraging reaction to Ellen White's writings: a sense of familiarity with the cadence of her language; a deep sense of guilt and helplessness; a tendency to "zone out" and lose concentration.

Admittedly, my reaction does not reflect all Adventists' reactions to reading EGW. Some honor her and revere her writings; others rarely see her books and are not familiar with her works. Still others know her works but consider her to be peripheral: useful as commentary for emphasizing a point—a foundational icon that adds authority to one's argument. Some aren't sure what they think of her; they hold her writings in tension, dismissing her as a personal authority but retaining her as a prophetic voice that shaped their Adventist culture.

One thing, however, most Adventists hold in common, even if unconsciously: they experience her influence in their attachments to Adventist distinctive doctrines. Their deep commitment to the Sabbath, to their "state of the dead" doctrine, to their understanding of words such as grace, faith, and trust, to their perception of the "time of trouble" and the coming Sunday law—all these are rooted in Ellen White. Even those who do not know EGW's writings "know" her message. It is embedded within Adventist theology and culture.

As I read, I realized that it would be nearly impossible for an Adventist to learn the gospel from Ellen White's own words without also developing a deepening attachment to Ellen White herself. Because they already know she is credited with prophetic status, using her carefully chosen words to present the gospel would cement their trust in her. Adventists would have increasing faith in her works, and as they read more and more of them, they would trust even her non-gospel passages and fall into increasing confusion and bondage.

One source of truth

Learning the gospel from Ellen White would leave an Adventist with no clearer understanding of what to "do" than he already had. Adventists know that the church and Ellen White say the Sabbath will be the "final test" during the time of

We must not compromise the gospel by helping people “attach” to an unreliable witness.

trouble; it will be the mark of their loyalty to Jesus.¹ They believe that if they were to leave the Sabbath once they “understand” it, they would lose their salvation.²

For an Adventist to learn the gospel from Ellen White would prepare him to further accept the seventh-day Sabbath as his demonstration of loyalty to Christ. Such use of EGW would solidify her as a reliable source of truth and would anchor the Adventist securely to the “remnant church” and all its unique teachings which derive from EGW’s writings, including the investigative judgment, the “health message,” the “state of the dead,” and Ellen White’s writings as “a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.”³

The Bible alone is the source of truth and is sufficient for equipping every person “for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This same Bible warns us against teachers who add to the gospel:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day... Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’ These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings (Colossians 2:16, 20-21).

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned (Galatians 1:8-9)!

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:1-4).

Evaluate the messenger

Would a Christian missionary use the writings of Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, or Mary Baker Eddy to teach the gospel to Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or Christian Scientists?

Before using a human writer as the source of gospel teaching, one must first decide if that writer accurately teaches the gospel and represents the truth about the Lord Jesus in his or her works. If the writer does not teach biblical truth, that person must not be used as a reliable witness of the gospel.

When Paul and Silas were in Philippi, a “slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future” met them. For several days she followed them around, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved” (Acts 16:16-17).

Finally, deeply troubled, Paul commanded the spirit to come out of the girl. Even though she was delivering the truth, she was the wrong messenger.

Similarly, Jesus met a demon-possessed man in the synagogue at Capernaum. When Jesus went in to preach, this man cried out at the top of his voice, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

Sternly Jesus said, “Be quiet! Come out of him” (Luke 4:33-35)!

Truth delivered by a messenger who also preaches “another gospel” loses its purity. We must not compromise the gospel by helping people “attach” to an unreliable witness.

Truth will set you free

As I finished reading the study presenting the gospel through the writings of Ellen White I thought back to my own discovery of the new covenant gospel. For several years I had been reading the Bible without the help of Ellen White. In fact, I had been actively praying that God would teach me the truth of Scripture without an overlay of “EGW understanding.” While more and more details were becoming clear, I still failed to understand that Jesus alone keeps the covenant with the Father and places me in Him when I believe in Him, thus covering me totally with Himself and His own personal righteousness.

Not until I came to the point of admitting to myself that Ellen White was a false prophet was I able to see clearly what the Bible taught about Jesus and the new covenant. Only when I released my right to respect Ellen White as a prophetic voice and a contributor to my spiritual worldview could I understand that in Jesus my salvation is complete. Jesus has fulfilled all that was written in “the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). He is the reality for whom I had longed when my life had been shaped by His shadow (see Colossians 2:16-17).

I knew how to answer the question we had been asked. The gospel is clearly preached only when we use the Bible as our sole authority.

Jesus is the substance of all reality, and He is God’s final Word to us (Hebrews 1:2).

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). †

1. “The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted.” E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

2. “... We believe that being Seventh-day Adventists has a direct bearing on our salvation; that while a believer can be saved as a Catholic, I would risk my whole spiritual life and salvation were I to leave what I am now and join any other community.” Jan Paulson, *The Theological Landscape No. 4*, “The Idea of Remnant” printed in the *Adventist Review*, (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD, 2002).

3. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe, an exposition of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, fundamental belief #18, Pacific Press Publishing Assoc, Boise ID, c 2005, p. 247.

The title of this article is taken from a series of Frank Capra films commissioned by the United States during World War II. The purpose of Capra's series was to explain to soldiers and the general public why the U.S. was engaged in the conflict.¹ This article has a similar purpose. All one need do is peruse the "Letters to the Editor" section of this publication to see that this ministry is indeed involved in a conflict. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate why engagement in conflict is sometimes necessary and why

In evaluating the system, we also draw conclusions about the effects of the system of belief on the lives of people, but we are not judging individuals themselves. I believe that most readers, of all backgrounds, would agree that it is possible for God to reach and regenerate an individual within a system regardless of what that system might be. However, this possibility does not necessarily say anything about the system itself. A person may come to Christ in spite of a bad system, not because of it. Likewise, even in a good system, a particular

Why we



this ministry is on the front lines.

"Why do you go around judging Adventists? Doesn't the Bible say, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'?" I have heard these questions often, in various forms, since I began writing for *Proclamation!* It's not only Adventists who ask them, but some former Adventists and other Christians as well. They are legitimate questions, but I believe they reveal presuppositions based upon two common misunderstandings.

The first is a misunderstanding of Jesus' injunction against judging in Matthew 7:1. Jesus is not speaking against exercising any type of judgment or discernment. In the context of the broader passage, He is speaking against judging in a spirit of self-centered pride. Holman's excellent *New Testament Commentary* states the case this way, "A good summary of [Jesus'] meaning is, 'Do not judge others until you are prepared to be judged by the same standard. And then, when you exercise judgment toward others, do it with humility.'"² The fact is, the Bible commands us in various ways and many places to exercise judgment, but when we do we are to judge with righteous judgment.³

The second misunderstanding is the belief that those who express concerns regarding the Adventist system are judging all Adventists. I know many of the writers for *Proclamation!* and have never detected any desire to judge the Adventist people. We are not attempting to make a judgment about each and every individual within the system, nor are we attempting to judge all individuals collectively. What we do discuss in the pages of this magazine is the nature of a particular religious system, *as a system*. When we do so, we are attempting to draw certain critical conclusions about a system of thought, belief, and practice.

individual may never come to know Jesus. So we need to be clear that it is the *system* we are judging and not the people.

Why judge?

Now that the two most common misunderstandings have been addressed, an additional question may arise. "So why is it so important to make these types of judgments about religious systems?" Consider for a moment the mission statement of Life Assurance Ministries, the publisher of *Proclamation!*: "To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion." While most evangelical Christians would find this mission laudable, at least some fail to realize what is inherent in carrying out the mission. If one is to combat the errors of false religion, one must first make a judgment about whether a system of belief constitutes false religion. In evaluating a system, our conclusion will dictate the appropriate response. There are two primary conclusions at which we might arrive:

1. The religious system in question represents orthodox Christianity in the essentials and teaches the same Gospel as Jesus and His apostles.
2. The religious system in question denies orthodox Christianity in one or more of the essentials and/or teaches a different gospel than Jesus and His apostles.

If we determine that the religious system is orthodox Christianity and teaches the true Gospel, then we have absolutely no business influencing people to leave it. We might disagree on a few non-essentials, but if it's Christianity in the essentials and the Gospel, then drawing people out of it is "sheep stealing." Engaging in such an act is a sin that divides the body of Christ. Put bluntly, if Adventism is orthodox Christianity, then Life Assurance Ministries is engaged in sin!

If however, the religious system in question denies one or more of the essentials of the Christian faith or teaches a different gospel, then it is a false religion. We then have a sacred duty to help the poor souls held in bondage within the false system. If Adventism is something other than orthodox Christianity, then we cannot shirk our duty to expose the errors and assist people within it to leave and to integrate into the body of Christ.

Adventism's self-definition

As we wrestle with how to classify Adventism as a system and whether or not it is just another expression of the body of Christ, it is instructive to understand how Adventist sources view Adventism. Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) fundamental belief number 13 states in part, "The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant *has been called out* to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."⁴

"fight"

CHRISTOPHER LEE

Notice the use of "has been called" in the present perfect progressive tense. This is not something that will only take place in the future, but something that took place in the past and is happening now in the present.⁵ Underlying this fundamental belief is the teaching that Adventism is presently, and has been since its inception during the Millerite movement of 1844, the remnant church of God.

In the textbook *Christian Beliefs: Fundamental Teachings for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes*,⁶ the SDA church is identified as the remnant church of Revelation 12:17 due in part to its proclamation of the "three angels' messages."⁷ It is claimed that the first angel delivered the unique Adventist message of an investigative judgment of believers' works beginning in 1844.⁸ The second angel then declares that Babylon has fallen.⁹ The *Christian Beliefs* textbook states, "The Millerites preached this message [that Babylon had fallen] beginning in the summer of 1844. They applied it to the churches that had rejected the first angel's message."¹⁰ One of the most authoritative sources within Seventh-day Adventism, Ellen G. White, viewed Adventism as having special truths such as the investigative judgment that should result in people separating themselves from all the other churches which are part of Babylon.¹¹

Even with this very small sample of SDA references, it can readily be seen that Adventism has traditionally set itself apart from all other "churches" who do not accept unique SDA doctrines. Those who accepted the 1844 message, originally referring to the return of Christ to the earth and later morphed into the investigative judgment, were the remnant people of God. People in all other "churches" were to come out of what was disdainfully referred to as Babylon.

In reality, there is only one Church, but many denominations which make up the visible Church. However, by defining Adventism as the remnant church and other denominations as Babylon, SDA sources render Adventism distinct from what most evangelicals would consider to be the visible manifestation of the body of Christ.

The self-assessments of SDA sources alone suggest that Adventism is something other than orthodox Christianity.

Nothing is neutral

For this and many other doctrinal reasons, *Proclamation!* takes the stand that Adventism as a system is not consistent with orthodox Christianity. However, it is often debated, even among the writers of *Proclamation!*, exactly what label best applies. It is the opinion of this

author that once it is clear that a system of belief is not orthodox Christianity, it matters very little which label we use. We might use words and phrases like heterodox, unorthodox, an aberrant theological system, a false system, another gospel, a corruption of the gospel, a corruption of Christianity, a cult of Christianity, and so forth. Ultimately, all these words and phrases are saying that this system is something other than orthodox Christianity and that the Church has a duty to help those who are trapped in that system to come out. Once that conclusion has been reached, the discussion of labels is primarily an argument of semantics.

We must be careful not to become overly embroiled in superfluous debates. We could discuss which words to use to describe the system *ad nauseam*, or we could endlessly discuss the exact nature of Ellen White's visions, her angel guides, and how these things reflect on Adventism as a system. These are important and interesting discussions, but it seems unlikely that extended debate will produce consensus of opinion on these topics. While this author certainly has opinions on these side issues, in the final analysis, the only opinion that counts is God's opinion

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Chris Lee lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with his wife, Carmen, and daughters, Ashlyn and Alyssa. They attend the Lincoln Berean Church. Chris is a self-described "theology junkie" whose mission is to proclaim the unfathomable grace of Christ in a clear, understandable, and Biblical way.



Why we “fight” FROM PAGE 19

as expressed in His word. I see nothing in the Scriptures to suggest that any system of thought is completely neutral in the ultimate sense. I believe the overwhelming thrust of Scripture teaches that there are those systems which are of God, and there are those systems which are ultimately part of this world system and its ruler. Nothing is completely neutral in an ultimate sense. Ongoing debates about ancillary issues tend to obscure this most basic reality.

The reality that nothing is ultimately neutral brings us back to the necessity of rightly judging religious systems and then rightly responding. If Adventism is orthodox Christianity, then Life Assurance Ministries needs to leave it alone and make no more effort to persuade people to come out of the system. If, however, Adventism is a corruption of Christianity, then we have a duty to help rescue those caught in it. If Adventism is not of God, then our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.¹² If this is true, then the rescue operation is not just a cognitive exercise to be done in the flesh through well-reasoned arguments; it's a spiritual war. We must never forget this. As soon as we do, we're missing the real battle.

Each of us must come to a conclusion, based on the word of God and much prayer, as to whether Adventism represents orthodox Christianity or something else. We must then respond accordingly. It is my prayer that every concerned Christian will become a soldier

in the real battle. It is my prayer that each of us will avoid expending our energies on unproductive debates. Instead, I pray that all believers will be engaged in the struggle against spiritual forces as the indwelling Spirit of God leads and empowers. May we never surrender one single precious soul without a fight. In the words of a Civil War-era hymn, “As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free; while God is marching on.”¹³ †

Endnotes

1. *Why We Fight*. Wikipedia. December 17, 2007. January 12, 2008. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why_We_Fight>
2. This paragraph closely follows material from Gangel, Kenneth. *Holman New Testament Commentary: John*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman, 2005.
3. John 7:24.
4. *Adventist Beliefs: Fundamental Beliefs*. Seventh-day Adventist Church. January 12, 2008. <<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>> (Emphasis mine.)
5. *Literacy Education Online: A Summary of Verb Tenses*. St. Cloud University. January 11, 2008. January 12, 2008. <<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/tenses.html>>
6. Although published in 1959, this textbook was in use in SDA colleges at the time I was a student in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
7. Jemison, T.H. *Christian Beliefs: Fundamental Teachings for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes*. Boise Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1959, pg. 342.
8. *Ibid.* pg. 328.
9. Revelation 14:8.
10. Jemison, T.H. *Christian Beliefs: Fundamental Teachings for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes*. Boise Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1959, pg. 342.
11. White, Ellen. *The Great Controversy*. Mountain View California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950, pg. 390.
12. Ephesians 6:12.
13. Howe, Julia. *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, 1861.

Prayers I didn't know to pray FROM BACK PAGE

we returned. I longed for a Spirit-filled place to worship.

Several years passed. In January, 1999, our daughter Genelle found a flyer left on her car at Loma Linda Academy. The flyer was an invitation to a presentation at a local church by Mark Martin, a former Seventh-day Adventist pastor. She attended and returned saying, “I never want to be called a Seventh-day Adventist again!”

I was devastated! Several months later, at the urging of my sister, we watched the video *The Spirit Behind the Church* that Genelle had brought home in January. I had already accepted the Adventists' explanation of Ellen White's plagiarism and claims of being a prophet, though, so I wasn't impressed by the video.

My sister, however, said to me in exasperation, “Cora, if she isn't from God, who is she from?”

I knew then I had to study to determine if the doctrines and my beliefs were actually the “truth.” That was an extremely hard assignment. I was terrified! I had been taught that to question was wrong, that Satan's angels would deceive me, and that at the end-time there would be a falling away from the “true church.” I didn't want to be part of that “falling away.”

I prayed hard during my study. I wanted to make sure that it was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Father, Jesus Christ, and The Holy Spirit that were with me.

As I studied, God removed the veil from my eyes, and a whole “new” Bible lay in front of me. I couldn't believe this was the same book I had been reading all my life. We eventually ventured out and attended Saturday night services at Calvary Chapel; even if the meeting was after sundown, at least the day was right. Finally, in

October, we attended our first Sunday service. Not only was there incredible praise and worship, but I was fed spiritually from the Bible. Not only did I not receive the mark of the beast, but I found my true Sabbath. Now Jesus is my rest seven days a week, not just one out of seven. *Our God is an Awesome God!*

I've wondered why traditional Adventists are so opposed to contemporary praise services. Is it because God opens eyes, lights up His word, and fills His people with His Spirit as they sing the prayers they don't know how to pray?

“But You are holy, enthroned upon the praises of Israel.” (Psalms 22:4b-b).⁸ *Blessed be the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come... may your kingdom be established in our praises, as your people declare your mighty works... Blessed be the Lord God Almighty who reigns forever more!*⁹

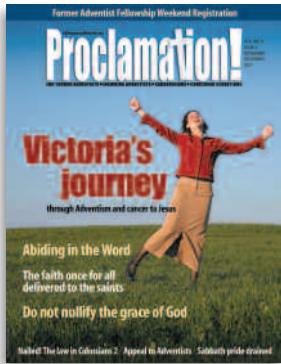
Amen! †

1. *The Jewish Bible, Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*, The new JPS translation according to the traditional Hebrew text. The Jewish Publication Society Philadelphia, Jerusalem 1985.
2. “Father I Want You to Hold Me”; Brian Doerksen, c 1991, Mercy/Vineyard Publishing.
3. “Open Our Eyes”; Bob Cull c 1976, Maranatha Music.
4. “Holy and Anointed One”; John Barnett, c 1976 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing & “Thy Word”; Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith c 1984 Word Music, Inc.
5. “Lord I Lift Your Name on High”; Rick Founds c 1989 Maranatha Music administered by The Copyright Co. Nashville, TN.
6. “Blessed Be the Lord God Almighty”; Bob Fitts, c 1985 Scripture in Song Administered by Maranatha Music.
7. “Awesome God”; Rich Mullins c 1988 BMG Songs, Inc.
8. *The Jewish Bible, Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*, The new JPS translation according to the traditional Hebrew text. The Jewish Publication Society Philadelphia, Jerusalem 1985.
9. “Blessed Be the Lord God Almighty”; Bob Fitts, c 1985 Scripture in Song Administered by Maranatha Music.

Hang in there!

We just received our November/December issue of *Proclamation!* I read the Letters to the Editor and am still numb from the scathing rebuke you received from Wadena, Minnesota. Whoa! How sad that someone felt the need to lash out like that.

I just wanted you guys to know that my husband and I both have enjoyed every issue of *Proclamation!* and that we look forward to receiving it every other month. Thanks for the great work you do! Both of our fathers (both raised in the Adventist Church) and one brother are also receiving your publication. We know it blesses



November/December 2007 issue

Back issues are available at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

them too. I can only imagine how tough it must be to receive such critical letters from supposedly happy SDA members. Please know that you do a wonderful and life-changing work for the glory of God. We thank Him for you, your commitment to the truth, and your ministry.

YUCAIPA, CA

Great reference

What a way to end the year — wow—what a year of brilliant articles on which to draw to enhance ones understanding of the SCRIP-TURAL GOSPEL.

Again, I wish you to know that your efforts are really, really appreciated. It is great to initiate dis-

cussions and then be able to refer the discussie to the printed word which is so well presented as well as being readily accessible for reference and downloading. It really gives the discussie something concrete to play with. (Some of 'em are really confounded.)

I am in the process of reallocating priorities (finance wise) so that I can in a small regular way contribute as a partner in the ongoing production of this very necessary magazine.

I wish you all God's continuing blessings for another successful year of endeavor.
AUSTRALIA

God have mercy

Please remove my name from your mailing list. You are being led by the devil. May God have mercy on all of you.
HILLSDALE, WI

God is crying out to Adventists today

Recently after getting broadband internet I finally had the chance to watch the streaming videos online of *The Spirit Behind the [Adventist] Church*, the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) story *Called to be Free* and *The Bible vs. The Book of Mormon* all in one sitting. My immediate impression was how incredibly similar the three experiences were. Although each cult has had different beliefs, the way in which they were created, defended, supported and maintained were uncannily similar. It became screamingly obvious to me for the first time how Seventh-day Adventism is plainly just a cult, period.

I had known much of this before, but I had shied from saying so for one reason or another, mainly not wishing to offend friends still in Adventism whom I know do love the Lord. In saying that Adventism is a cult, I'm not saying every Adventist is cultic (it depends mostly on the degree of exposure to core "Adventist truths"). Yet foundationally, organizationally and doctrinally, Adventism is rightly in the same class as Latter-Day Saints (LDS) and Jehovah's Witnesses (JW). God is able to save people in these churches just as it was possible for Him to save people in Ahab's Israel—but just as in Ahab's Israel, today the authority (the church, its foundation, its doctrine) is one that oppresses and hampers the Word of God, and the people are continually led astray by spiritual "parents".

While countless people are kept in darkness and bondage in the "kingdom" of Adventism, well-intentioned counselors in the system (who are themselves captive) advise us that the only way to change is by being an "Erasmus" or "Obadiah"—not speaking out boldly but working quietly. Like Dr. Martin Luther King's critics they caution against "moving too fast."

Instead I believe God is calling us to behold His wounded and abused children in Adventism and receive His heart for them without restraint. I believe He is calling for people so full of His heart for His beloved children that they will stand up and cry out the Gospel from the mountaintop! I believe He is calling for Elijahs who will proclaim the Messiah—the Lord Our Righteousness—is the only salvation for the abuse which spiritual fathers have passed onto their spiritual children.

I believe God is crying out to Adventists today—and especially to spiritual fathers, mothers, and shepherds—saying, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" If Adventism and Ellen White's "God" is the true

Biblical one, then serve him. But if he does not stand the test of the Bible, then serve the one true God of the Bible.

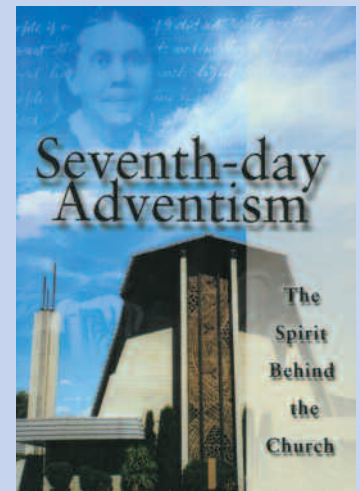
I know many people think that former Adventists pick on too many little things, on seemingly harmless doctrines like soul sleep and annihilationism. If only one of these doctrines were in a Gospel-grounded church and were not a criteria of judgment or a prophetically-announced "truth," then former Adventists wouldn't harp on them. But in Adventism there are so many of these "little things".

Once you see videos like those about the LDS or former WCG, then you understand that accumulating too many of these little "deviations" is a classic symptom of a larger problem—a larger spiritual sickness. They are symptoms of a cultic system of belief with a cultic foundation.

Finally, the striking similarities in the letters to the editor section of *Proclamation!* magazine and the letters to the editors of former-Mormon and former-JW ministries is testament enough to the truth about Adventism being a cult. Adventist apologists will try to make out such inflammatory comments as being the few odd apples in an overall good batch, yet if you read your Ellen White and early Adventist literature, you'll note that it is these inflammatory comments which most resemble Ellen White's letters and the spirit of foundational Adventism. The modern apologists are the ones that Mrs. White and the other early Adventist leaders would have disfellowshipped as apostates and consigned to "Babylon".

Again, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" If Adventism is Biblical, follow; but if it does not stand the Bible test, follow the God of the Bible.

OSAKA, JAPAN



This video may be viewed online or purchased at ExAdventist.com.

No more

Quit sending me your lies. As a former Adventist you are now working for the devil. I hope you come to your senses before it is too late.
SHERMANS DALE, PA

Saddened

I am saddened as I read this November/December issue of *Proclamation!* There is so much effort and finance expended here trying to convince people you are right in what you are advocating, when you in your own heart know better. Think of those who are suffering from starvation and deprivation who could be helped, if

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES

MISSION

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

MOTTO

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

MESSAGE

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

your efforts were directed toward that area. Just because you are miserable, please don't try to make others follow down the dead-end road you are going. You have twisted the Scriptures to fit your needs, trying to convince yourself, and others, you are correct in your thinking.

I'm sure there are many who are taken in with your warped way of thinking, who never have studied for themselves. David Koresh, Jim Jones, and others like them preyed on people who were very intelligent, and of course those who were less inclined, and they acquired a large following. You too will be successful in leading people away from the truth, but when all is over and the dust settles, where will you stand in that great day?

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

I have been a Seventh-day Adventist for many years. If there was a church out there with a message of truth more so than the Adventist church I would have left it long ago. But there isn't. And most assuredly your ministry doesn't qualify for that position. Please don't fool yourself.

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

ALVARADO, TX

Pain and division over Adventism

I would like to receive your magazine; my husband was getting them in the mail, and I found them in his garbage. He is a Seventh-day

Adventist and an elder in the Adventist church. I am a Christian and have been all my life. We have been together for twenty-seven years; he was not in church when I met him; I was.

I didn't know about Adventism, but he always told me it could break us up. Well, the time finally came when he started back attending church about 16 years ago, and it's been all but easy in our home.

Our children were brought up in church and accepted Christ while attending with me; eventually he required them to go with him. The three younger ones were not allowed to attend on Sunday anymore.

Our oldest son recently, within the last four years or so, has switched over to Adventism. It has caused so much pain and division in our home. I've tried going with them, but I do not agree with all that the Adventists teach and how heavily they rely upon Ellen White.

I've prayed and prayed, and then I found your *Proclamation!* magazine, as I stated, in the garbage. I was only able to enjoy some copies and ordered one for myself, but... they have not come since your May/June 07 issue.

I would like to continue receiving *Proclamation!* It was starting to give me some answers to this religion that I don't quite understand. [It was helping me] understand why they are the way they are.

Would you be so kind as to please send me back and current issues so I can learn from

I found rest in the journey FROM PAGE 5

Paul's writings made sense for the first time in my life! I was no longer trying to figure out which "law" Paul was referring to. He only referred to one law. It was as if the scales had come off of my eyes.

New church

So where did this realization leave me? I was a Seventh-day Adventist that did not believe in Ellen White, and I embraced the new covenant of faith in Jesus Christ. Karen and I decided to begin attending a different kind of Adventist church— Franklin (Tennessee) SDA Church. It was different because the pastor there preached righteousness by faith. It was in one of his sermons in which he used an illustration of salvation as a free gift that finally moved me to see I am not saved by the day on which I worship but by accepting the gift. I finally got it!

I had still been trying to make my new understanding fit my Adventist worldview. I just couldn't do it. God had given me the desire to know him better, and then he sent people that I loved and knew to help lead me to His truth.

Now we had the task of finding a new church. Once again Karen and I asked for guidance because we did not know where to start. An

Adventist friend of mine that did some accounting work for the pastor of a local community church called World Outreach Church told me I might want to check out that congregation. At the same time a number of Karen's co-workers recommended World Outreach Church.

One memorable Sunday we finally went and experienced our first service at a non-Adventist church. Karen and I were so moved by the presence of the Holy Spirit there. This inter-denominational church had been placed in our path so that we might continue in our new-found love of Jesus and belief in salvation by faith.

My journey to become a more devoted Christ-follower began with a desire to teach my children and to know the religion that I had professed all of my life. When I took off my Seventh-day Adventist-colored glasses and took away the Ellen White filter, I found the message that had been there all along. God's message was clearer than I had understood before.

I am blessed to have my wife Karen in my life, sharing this journey of discovery and commitment to the Lord Jesus. She is a godly woman and is not afraid to seek Christ's will, wherever that may lead. My journey happily continues today as I rest everyday in the finished work of Christ.

†

those who have experienced this first hand?

If you publish this, please don't include name/state; it would only add to the fire.

Save the forest; take me off

There must be some misunderstanding. My experience in the Seventh-day Adventist church over the last 60 years does not seem to be the same as yours and many of your readers. While the church has gone through different periods of putting too much emphasis on works over grace, I think that there has been good dialogue through it all for the most part. I really think that your mission, motto and message statements could just as easily come from the *Adventist Review*. Usually when an organization such as yours goes all out attacking as you do, they have come in contact with someone or some administrator that did not rightly represent the true spirit of the church. I would just like to apologize for that because I think you have not really seen the true church through the correct lenses. I truly hope and pray that you may have another experience that may shed better light on your path so that you may see God's church the way He would want it seen.

I do have to mention one more thing. Why don't you find a different identity? If you say you are former Adventists I think I know what you mean, but it could give someone the idea that you also no longer believe in the Advent of our Lord. Will you take that away too?

Save the forest; take me off your mailing list.
BREWSTER, WA

Word of God does not change

I have enjoyed reading your thought-provoking periodical for quite a while now, probably since you first began your publication. When I first began receiving it, my husband and I were active SDA members at Mentone SDA Church in Southern California. We are no longer SDA members, which is a very long story in itself, but God has never left our side. I am so

grateful for His loving care and saving grace. I have noticed that no matter the persuasion of the Christian, if the true Spirit of Christ resides in the heart, it is reflected in all that is said and done.

I am grieved to hear the viciousness of those who disagree with positions of the various articles when they write to express their views. I expect Christ is saddened by it also....

When pondering about coming back to the SDA church I thought perhaps I should read *Steps to Christ* just one more time and maybe get it "right" this time. I never was very good at living up to the impossible standards put forth by EG White in the first place. Her statement that only one in 20 Adventists would be saved is abysmal and a lie. As a teenager, I always prayed that God would not give up on me; I really wanted to be the that one that was the exception to her rule. However, I found that the back-biting and "I am better than Thou" attitudes of many SDA's I grew up around just did not appeal. Then I heard the still small voice tell me to "Just read the Bible." So I did and continue to do so. What joy and grace are found in those precious pages telling of the saving grace and precious gift of Jesus.

I hope you are able to continue to put forth these thought provoking articles. The truth of the word of God can always stand up to questioning and searching. It does not change.

PRINCETON, IN

Anger, bitterness, and ridicule

If you believe in your convictions to the degree that you have stated in your work, then it will grow without the high pressure and heavy handed techniques you have employed to date. In addition, the amount of bitterness and anger that comes through in many of the articles in the form of ridicule toward Adventism serves to undermine you as well... It seems as though your main issue is Sabbath keeping. (The others such as the investigative judgment, the heavenly sanc-

tuary, etc. seem to get some lip service but are not the main deal.)

[Your] desire to shop, go to movies, participate in sports, and generally behave like the rest of the world does, really smacks of much different issues—mainly of selfishness and self-interests—than it does of theology. But that is your business with Christ, not mine. Having the patience to remain committed may make a world of difference for many of you in the long term. I know it is gratifying in the near term to just live however you'd like, but are you really placed in the world for just you? Or were your days ordained for the higher purpose of serving God according to HIS calling and HIS purposes?

Evidently you have decided to follow Jesus according to your way and your understanding, and not His... I just would like to keep your ideas out of my mailbox. They are not what I adhere to, nor does my husband, and we are training our children according to our understanding of the Scriptures, and your magazine would be very confusing to them at the current time considering their ages and maturity levels. When they are adults, I will be placing their spiritual connection in the Father's capable hands according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They may opt to view all this differently than I do, and as in your case, that will be their option at that time. But right now, it is mine, and I opt out of your agenda. Your departure from the denomination is regrettable, because clearly you have a tremendous number of evident gifts, but please be clear about why you left. It is about selfishness—period.

In closing, I respectfully request no answer to this email. I don't need one. God be with you all, and I pray grace for each of you.

EMAIL

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:
Editor, Proclamation! Magazine
P.O. Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373
 OR EMAIL EDITOR: proclamation@gmail.com

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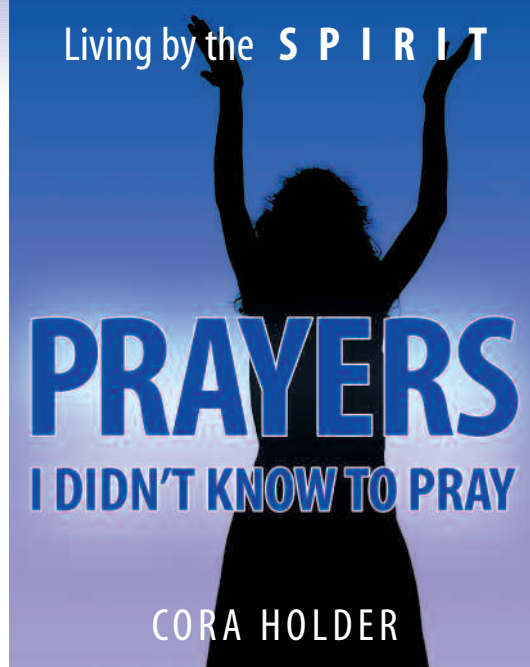
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Raise a shout for God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name, make glorious His praise. Selah. Come and hear, all God-fearing men, as I tell what He did for me, I called aloud to Him, glorification on my tongue. Had I an evil thought in my mind, The LORD would not have listened. But God did listen; He paid heed to my prayer. Blessed is God who has not turned away my prayer, Or His faithful care from me (Psalms 66: 2, 16-20).¹

I loved and was proud of being an Adventist. I was trying to do everything right. I led in Cradle Roll and Kindergarten Sabbath School, was a Pathfinder leader, had special Friday evening suppers by candlelight, and took the kids for special Sabbath afternoon activities, but I had an emptiness that I didn't know how to fill. I didn't know how to pray or what to pray for. I had a religion but not a relationship.

Then one day I stood in a new place. People young and old were crowded in the pews singing a song I had never heard in a way I had never experienced—with hands raised and a look of complete joy on their faces. This was my first time at Celebration Center in Colton, California, a non-traditional Adventist church service that was creating tidal waves in the denomination. As I stood there and experienced worship for the first time in my life, I knew I had to have what I observed these people experiencing. "God," I prayed, "I need this; I want this joy." Immediately I saw a bright light dropping from the stained-glass



I prayed hard during my study. I wanted to make sure that it was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Father, Jesus Christ, and The Holy Spirit that were with me.

Cora Holder is a graduate of Loma Linda University School of Nursing. She currently works as an RN for Kaiser Permanente in Colton, California. She and her husband Wally were both fourth-generation Adventists. Today they are approaching their eighth year of living in Christ's freedom. They have two adult children, and they worship at Calvary Chapel Redlands.

dove above me and felt heat pouring through me. I stood there crying.

I have never been the same! I became a Christian that day.

We began to attend regularly. The worship services were wonderful. I sang from my heart. The songs taught me of a loving Jesus who *loves me as I am*.² The songs became prayers that I didn't realize I was praying; *Open my eyes Lord, I want to see Jesus... open my ears Lord and help me to listen...*³

God saved me while I was in the Adventist church, but He heard my prayers. He opened my eyes and ears just as I asked. I told Him that I believed that His *word was a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path...*⁴ He allowed the veil of Moses to drop from my eyes (2 Corinthians 3:13 – 18). I believed that He *came from heaven to earth to show the way,*

*from the earth to the cross, MY DEBT TO PAY*⁵— an idea contrary to the last sermon I heard at the Loma Linda University church which stated that Jesus came to preach and teach us how to keep the commandments. *Father in heaven how we praise you, we lift your name in all the earth...*⁶

God did not leave us at Celebration Center, however, where I would have been content to sing praises. He allowed changes to take place there that I felt did not come from His leading, and they seemed to be a clear sign that I could no longer stay. I went into deep spiritual depression.

Where was I to worship when I believed only the Adventist church had the "truth"?

We had friends and family at the Loma Linda University Church, and I was still involved with the Pathfinders there, so

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