

Summer "Tour of Encouragement" (REMEMBERING)

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

# Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS  
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS  
SABBATARIANS  
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

FALL 2009  
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 4

## Who is The Source

Are you standing in the place of God?  
More than all I could ask or imagine  
Sabbath veil removed  
Together we live  
God's word or the words of men

ELLEN G. WHITE, PROPHET OF  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM



RICHARD TINKER

## Reflections on the journey

**T**he magazine you hold in your hands is a result of God's faithfulness and provision. But then, this whole year has been filled with God's glory and love as he cared for this work.

Our last issue published was the May/June issue; and as I write this, we are days away from Thanksgiving. Why the long lapse? It has everything to do with our supporters being impacted by the downward move of the economy. But recently the supporters responded to the need, making it possible to resume publishing this magazine.

I want to share with you a few of my experiences from the Tour of Encouragement this past summer. I admit that when Dale Ratzlaff suggested the idea of a cross-country odyssey, I was doubtful I would be involved. But God had other plans.

The first trip was a day drive to Auburn, California. I was amazed by the

warmth I felt from people I had never met. I suspect my experience with other former Adventists is similar to my Korean War veteran father's attachment to the other vets he enjoys talking to endlessly—only better. We not only share the same "war stories" from Adventism, but we now share the same Spirit of God Who gave us our new birth into the body of Christ. By the end of our Auburn meetings, I was hooked.

The second trip involved driving to Nebraska, Michigan, Ohio, and then home. It was fun touring the campus of Union College and driving through the local Adventist community. It amazed me that the Adventist sector of Lincoln looked so much like the communities around Pacific Union College and Loma Linda University. Apparently many Adventists in each community built homes with the idea that Jesus would be coming very soon.

The people in Lincoln were wonderful. Pastor Bryan Clark of our host church was so supportive of this work. I especially enjoyed the fact that although he pastors a mega-church, he, like me, is shy. The high point at Lincoln was discovering that a woman that attended our meetings had trusted Jesus alone and had been born again.

Our next stop was Michigan. We had heard through the Adventist grape-vine that things would be much more difficult for us near the Adventist seminary at Andrews University, but instead, we found the largest and most supportive

audience there. As a result of our meetings, our host church, The Chapel, now hosts a weekly Former Adventist Fellowship.

In addition to meetings, we toured the important Adventist sites including Camp Au Sable, Historic Adventist Village in Battle Creek, and Andrews University, where we joined hands and prayed for the release of the captives. It was a huge blast from the past to eat in the Andrews cafeteria with all the varieties of meat-like dishes.

Our next stop was Miamisburg, Ohio. What the group lacked in numbers they more than made up in big-hearted warmth and hospitality. We were taken on an inside tour of Kettering Medical Center as well as the Dayton Adventist church and surroundings. We were surprised how much Kettering reminded us of Loma Linda—except for Kettering's openly serving real coffee in the hospital lobby.

The last destination of the Tour took us south to Alabama, where we presented our meetings at Whitesburg Baptist Church, one of the largest churches in Huntsville. We enjoyed the good food and southern warmth, as well as meeting so many brothers and sisters in Christ. In addition to the meetings, we toured the campus of Oakwood University, the Adventist denomination's African American university. We were once again faced with the segregation of races that still occurs within Adventism. Praise the Lord that we are all one race in Christ!

We are making plans for future tours, and we hope to meet many more of the readers of *Proclamation!* In the meantime, we invite you to join us in Redlands from February 12–14 for the fifth annual Former Adventist Fellowship weekend, "Defending the Faith".

This issue marks the last issue of 2009. Our board is meeting in a few weeks to seek the Lord's direction and wisdom concerning the frequency of issues for 2010.

Pray with us that Life Assurance Ministries will fulfill the mission that God has ordained. And we will continue to pray for all of you, our readers, that you will follow Jesus, no matter the cost. †

**The high point at Lincoln was discovering that a woman that attended our meetings had trusted Jesus alone and had been born again.**

## Proclamation!

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LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

E-mail: [proclamation@gmail.com](mailto:proclamation@gmail.com)

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## Lots of questions from the summer tour answered

Following are a few questions we did not get to in the Q&A time on our recent *Tour of Encouragement*.

**Q. Could you please discuss how we can respond to Adventist Revelation Seminars when they come to our area? Thanks.**

**A.** A concerted effort should be made to alert the area evangelical churches that these are really Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings. Some people put notices in the paper, others have passed out flyers. For help with flyers, call 877-349-6984.

**Q. Is it true that Walter Martin changed his opinion about the Adventist church at the end of his life?**

**A.** We cannot give a definitive answer to this but we can say two things. First, we suggest that you watch the interview between Walter Martin and William Johnsson, then editor of *Adventist Review*, on the John Ankerberg show. Go to: [www.lifeassuranceministries.com/ankerberg.html](http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/ankerberg.html) Second, It is clear that the authors of *Questions on Doctrine*, which was written with the specific intent to cause Martin and Barnhouse to think Adventists were evangelical, were not presenting a fair picture of Adventist theology. Some Adventists now admit the Adventists involved were less than honest. Go to [www.lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2004\\_MarApr.pdf](http://www.lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2004_MarApr.pdf) for documentation on this topic.

**Q. Do you think that Acts 15 (the Jerusalem Council) was setting aside only circumcision, or was it setting aside the whole law including Sabbath-keeping?**

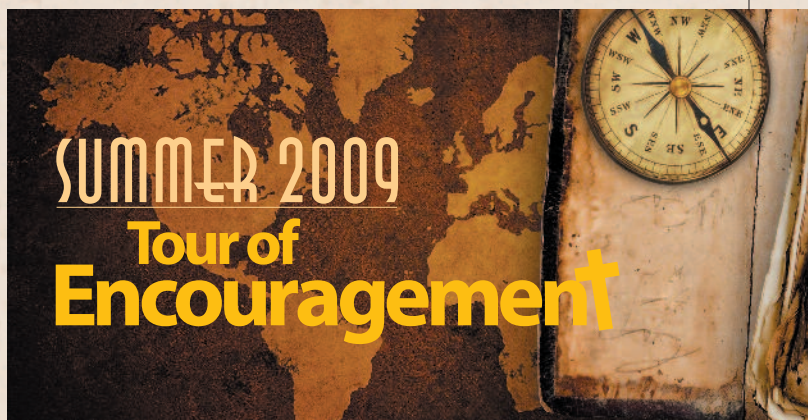
**A.** Circumcision and Sabbath stand or fall together. Circumcision qualified a person as a Jew; being Jewish mandated keeping the whole law, including Sabbath. Without circumcision, a person was not authorized to live under Jewish law. Sabbath was required only for circumcised persons who had adopted Judaism by being circumcised.

**Q. If the Sabbath is not for Christians today, why does Hebrews 4 state, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God"?**

**A.** Read the whole chapter. The "rest of God" cannot be the Seventh-day Sabbath for one enters "God's rest" the moment he/she believes (4:3). The chapter also states that Israel, Joshua, and David did not enter God's rest, but they did keep the Sabbath. The word for "Sabbath rest" used here is a unique word found only in this passage in Scripture. It refers to the rest of Grace which one can enter "Today." See *Sabbath in Christ*, Chapter 19 for a complete study of this chapter.

**Q. Why focus on Adventism? How about the unbiblical doctrines in other denominations? No church is perfect.**

**A.** We agree that no church is perfect; neither are we. My answer has two parts; first, the Christian denominations originated in the apostolic gospel which holds Jesus to be all we need for



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salvation because, as eternal, almighty God, He died, rose again, and ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to propitiate our sin and give us His eternal life. Adventism originated in Arianism and anti-trinitarianism, denying Jesus was the eternal, almighty God and further denying that His work of salvation is complete. For documentation see "Discovering the Adventist Jesus" here:

[www.lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2007\\_MayJun.pdf](http://www.lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2007_MayJun.pdf)

Second, because of our nurture in and study of Adventism, we feel God has given us this ministry to Adventists. Others feel called to work for Mormons, yet others Jehovah's Witnesses. In order to be effective, one must be focused.

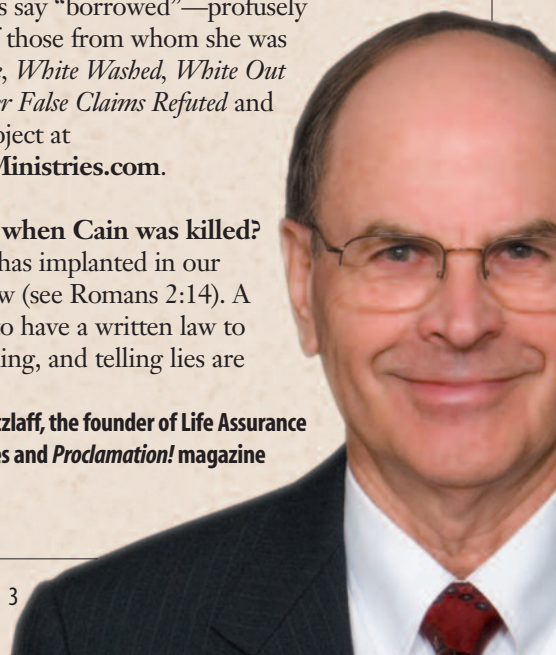
**Q. What do Adventists say now about Ellen White using others' writings as hers?"**

**A.** Over the years Adventists have said several things: Ellen White said she was surprised that others before her had written what God showed her, belying the fact that those books were in her library when she wrote. Others say she only copied what God showed her to copy in vision, and she only copied a little bit. However, it has now been shown, beyond a shadow of doubt, that she copied—Adventists say "borrowed"—profusely including the errors of those from whom she was copying. See *White Lie*, *White Washed*, *White Out* and *Ellen G. White, Her False Claims Refuted* and other books on the subject at [www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com](http://www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com).

**Q. Was it murder when Cain was killed?**

**A.** Of course. God has implanted in our heart natural, moral law (see Romans 2:14). A person does not have to have a written law to know that killing, stealing, and telling lies are wrong. †

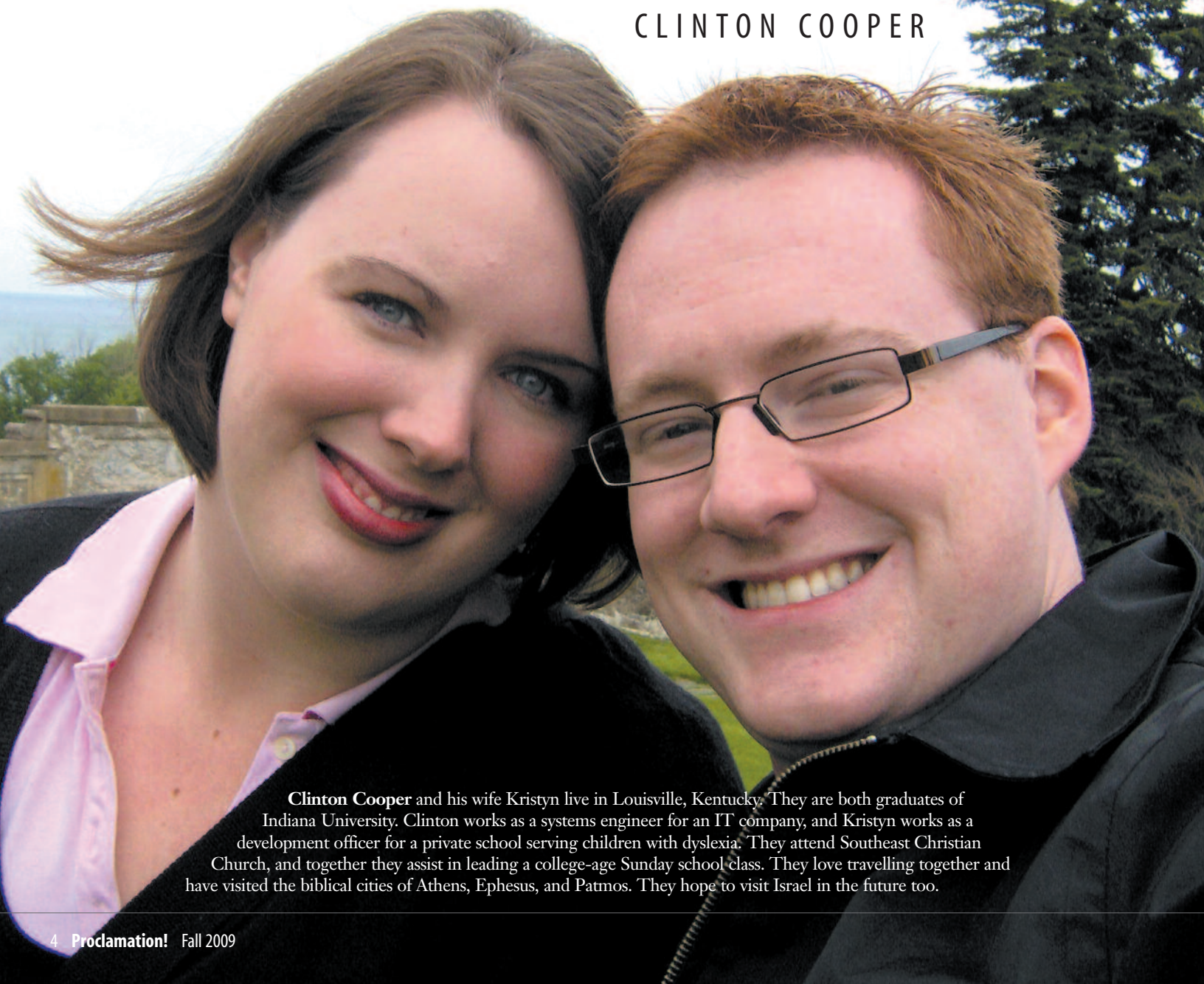
**Dale Ratzlaff, the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and Proclamation! magazine**



# MORE

than all I could ask or imagine

CLINTON COOPER



**Clinton Cooper** and his wife Kristyn live in Louisville, Kentucky. They are both graduates of Indiana University. Clinton works as a systems engineer for an IT company, and Kristyn works as a development officer for a private school serving children with dyslexia. They attend Southeast Christian Church, and together they assist in leading a college-age Sunday school class. They love travelling together and have visited the biblical cities of Athens, Ephesus, and Patmos. They hope to visit Israel in the future too.

was born into a strong Adventist family with deep roots in the denomination. Many of my aunts, uncles, and cousins lived in the same Adventist community we were in, and we all attended church and school together; some of us even worked together in a family-owned business. Those were happy years for me. I had very loving, generous parents whose wish was that my siblings and I would grow up to be caring, loving Christians. My childhood was not steeped in the strict legalism of traditional Adventism.

Yes, there were the typical Sabbath rules that surrounded the more-than-24-hour period from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening, but generally I didn't dislike those rules much. As I grew older and entered high school and college, I learned to love the Sabbath even more as it provided time to rest from the pressures of school and work.

I loved church growing up and went to Sabbath-school, worship service, potlucks, church plays, and special programs that my mother would help coordinate. I remember wondering why all other Christians didn't see the truth of the Sabbath as clearly as we all did. It seemed very simple to me.

When it came to other doctrinal matters, however, I was more confused. Revelation always confounded me. I remember hearing various explanations of Revelation in church and being overwhelmed by the seemingly random interpretations of the texts. When it came to more complex doctrines like the sanctuary service and the investigative judgment, I never could thoroughly understand them.

I didn't care for the prophecy seminars when they were held in our church or nearby venues, either. My mother shied away from having anything to do with these seminars or any sermons on the end-times, the time of trouble, or Daniel and Revelation. She was traumatized by them so much as a child that to this day she can't handle any Adventist presentation of them. I, too, had the same fears when I heard horror stories about how bad the end times would be—that during the time of trouble, we would have to stand without any help from Jesus mediating for us. We would have to be perfect to survive. These Adventist teachings would scare me so much I couldn't think about them, and led me to believe something was not right within my church.

I remember hearing sermons about repentance and committing our lives to Jesus. An emotional appeal would be made at church to the tune of the old hymn, "I Surrender All". I wanted to go forward and be saved when I heard those calls. The nervousness of the moment would make my heart pound in my chest as I contemplated responding. A few times I went up to commit my life to Christ, but a short time later, as I always did, I found myself unchanged, untransformed, and still feeling unsure, uncertain, and fearful about my whole destiny and salvation.

The process of selective hearing, common in Adventism, seemed to have served my family well, so I used this method,

too, by ignoring parts of the teaching that scared or confused me. We didn't study Ellen White at home except for the occasional quotation look-up for a Sabbath school lesson, and we seemed to turn a blind eye to her stranger writings and prophecies.

### **Craving more from God**

As I got older and attended college, I felt a craving for more from God, a deeper faith. I really wanted to know Him and the Bible more. I finally mustered up the courage to attend the weekday Bible study that the Baptist Student Union held on campus. It was very much an inter-denominational club, including students from every major Christian denomination represented in our area. I really enjoyed the fellowship and the on-campus pastor and the teaching she provided us. We began to study Galatians once during the semester. Up until that time, I had never studied a whole book of the Bible all the way through, only topically as typically done in the Sabbath-school quarterlies. Galatians confused me greatly as I read it! I didn't understand what it meant to be free from the law and to live by the Spirit because I thought the Ten Commandments were binding on all Christians. I remember asking Sheila, our campus pastor, what certain things meant as we studied Galatians. I didn't grasp the concepts of the book yet, but my curiosity was awakened, and I would turn back to Galatians time and time again from that point on.

Not long after that, while I was in my third year of college, I began to attend a large church occasionally with some friends of mine on Sundays. It felt very strange for me to be worshiping on Sunday, and I felt guilty for doing so, but thought it would be O.K. as long as I also worshiped on the true Sabbath—Saturday. I so desperately craved God in my life that I was going to seek Him wherever He was, even in a non-Adventist church. I felt and saw something there I hadn't ever experienced before. The church was alive, the teaching was powerful, and the people there had a joy that I did not have. I wanted that joy so badly that I kept going back trying to find it.

I didn't stay long at that church, but I was refreshed from my time there and left with a passion for Jesus and a desire to serve Him with my life. I began to help in youth ministry at my Adventist home church after I graduated from college. I

wanted deeply to teach the kids in the youth class about the grace and loving kindness of the Lord that I was beginning to learn. I wanted to make a difference where I was by teaching Jesus using the inductive, verse-by-verse Bible study that I had learned in college. I wanted to fix the church from within, to make it a place that lived and taught the grace of Christ. My desire to change things brought about many arguments and fights. I upset many parents when I decided to teach *The Purpose Driven Life* instead of the quarterly. I upset many people when I went to the grocery store on Sabbath morning to buy fresh doughnuts for my class—because I shouldn't be shopping on the Sabbath, but my kids were

happy I brought them, so I continued to do so!

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#### **Burned out**

After serving for four years in the youth department, I found myself burned out, depressed, and saddened by my failed attempts to change my church that I loved. My cognitive dissonance only grew more and more over those years as I became more skeptical of Adventist teaching and doctrine as a result of my own inductive study of the Bible. I felt guilty for having to teach doctrines I did not believe to be true. I was certain that the Adventist church was not the remnant church it claimed to be. I didn't believe in the investigative judgment. I was also convinced that if someone wasn't raised to keep the Sabbath and was not convicted to do so, they would not have to obey that commandment, but since I was still convicted to keep it, I should do so. I wasn't sure if Ellen White was a true prophet, but I knew many of her writings contradicted Scripture,

so I was definitely not going to teach or read her writings anymore. I was so burdened, burned-out, and disappointed that I found I could not even stay to listen to the sermon after I taught my youth Sabbath-school class. The teaching would upset me so much: a degraded view of Jesus, a warped view of grace, and a works-based salvation. I decided after much prayer that I would leave my home church and go wherever God planted me—at any church or in any denomination.

I planned my exit six months in advance so I could fulfill my duties in teaching the youth. When my last Sabbath came to teach at my church, I was surprised that my friends weren't more concerned. I got a few goodbyes, but nothing more. Perhaps they thought I'd be back soon.

I decided I would go first to another Adventist church near where I lived. I liked the pastor there, and it was a more con-

temporary church than my previous church home. I decided also to attend the large church I had visited years before, Southeast Christian Church, on Sundays.

After just two weeks, I felt the same spirit of legalism at this new Adventist church that I had dreaded so much. At the same time, I felt a tug on my heart from God that I should join Southeast Christian as my new church home. But how could I join a "Sunday-keeping" church? What would my parents think? Plus, I still had disagreements over different points of doctrine, such as the state of the dead, the Sabbath, the law, and hell. I did not want to join this church because I knew of the trouble it would cause. But God's call was stronger than my reservations.

I found myself the next Sunday sitting in the pew, my heart pounding in my chest, wanting to break out in tears because I was feeling so convicted to join this church. I obeyed and went forward during the altar call to ask for membership.

#### **Blessings follow obedience**

I couldn't believe the changes God started to perform in my life when I was obedient to His calling. I threw myself into service at the needs-based ministry at the church that served the less fortunate in the area. I loved serving and helping those who needed basic things that I took for granted, like food and household items. I joined a singles' Sunday school class and made many new friends. I would occasionally attend my old Adventist church with my parents, even with all my unsettled doubts, all the while trying to obey the Sabbath according to my convictions.

A few months later, I met my future wife in my Sunday school class. We bonded instantly over our shared interests of theology and Bible study. I had never met anyone so perfect for me! I had gained a lover, a friend, and a soul-mate all at the same time. God certainly had her in mind when I made the decision to join my new church. After we dated for three and a half months, I asked her to marry me. She gladly said yes, and we were married only three months later!

#### **New covenant glory**

My new wife had training in biblical Greek, a skill which was extremely helpful to me when we would discuss different matters of doctrine. I asked her continually what the new covenant was, as I really had no idea what it meant, and she helped me to understand it. After studying online with former Adventist pastors Mark Martin (exAdventist.com) and Clay Peck's (GracePlace.org) Bible studies, something clicked in my head, and everything became clear at once! After struggling for so many years about what the Christian life looked like, what grace really was, and how the Law and the new covenant fit into all these things, I finally understood.

I learned that the Ten Commandments are part of the old covenant and that the new covenant was about living by the Spirit, not by the letter, because the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life! I learned that I was under this new covenant

because of Jesus' atoning death on the cross, and His righteousness covered my sinful life by the free, unearned gift of grace. I learned that the Sabbath was just a shadow of the real rest to come, which is found in Jesus. I learned that I had an actual spirit that had been made alive when I believed in Christ as my Savior and Lord. I learned that the death of a believer is not non-existence in the grave, but an immediate transfer of my spirit from this body to the presence of the Lord. I learned that this new covenant did not mean I could go out and live as I pleased, but that I was now living by the Spirit who guided and directed my life. I also learned of the substantial evidence against Ellen White, and I now saw her as a false prophet.

The overwhelming knowledge of all these things made me so emotional that I wasn't able to keep my composure at work, and I found myself crying at my desk for several days. I was so amazed at what Christ had done, and at the same time I was amazed at how wrong I had been—and simultaneously

I was sad that I had been deceived by my church that I loved. Nevertheless, my doubts were now gone, and I had gained a new confidence in the Lord, not in what I could do for my own righteousness, but in what He has already done by Christ's own life in place of mine.

A few months later, because of a prompting from my wife, I decided to be baptized into my new-found faith in Jesus, as I knew once and finally that He is my substitute, my Savior, and my Lord. My wife decided to be re-baptized with me, too. Our church has all new believers repeat this good confession before anyone is baptized: "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, my Lord and Savior." Nothing more, nothing less. This is my confession now, too, and it frames my whole faith.

My life changed once I discovered the truth of Jesus and His new covenant. The power of Jesus and His new covenant transformed me. He is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. I am living proof of this. †

## Who pays for this magazine?

**G**od has been faithful beyond all we could ask or imagine; He has provided the means to produce *Proclamation!* for the past 10 years. This time of year marks the tenth anniversary of the first edition of the magazine.

Many times it has looked as if the magazine would not be mailed because there were not enough funds to pay the printer and the mailer—but God has always provided what we needed—many times right at the last minute.

Other times He has overwhelmed us with unexpected gifts that provided a buffer in the bank and assured us He has more ways than we can possibly imagine to provide for *Proclamation!* and to build our own trust in Him.

The issue of this magazine that you are reading now is dated "Fall 2009" and contains an extra eight pages.

Producing this one magazine instead of three for this time period has saved \$45,000.00. This economy was necessary because the financial difficulty in the nation now has affected the support for this magazine.

God was gracious again, however—He has again provided overwhelmingly at just the right time for this mailing.

The Life Assurance Ministries board of directors will be meeting within the next few weeks to discuss a variety of possible ways to manage in a time of economic change. At the same time, we also believe you would want to know that we are facing financial challenges. If you are not already giving to Life Assurance Ministries, we want to invite you to consider becoming a regular donor. We also want to suggest that listing Life Assurance Ministries in your will or trust is another way you can help provide for this ministry long-term.

We are trusting God both to provide and to direct the future of this ministry. We praise Him for bringing us into the joy of the freedom in Jesus, and we thank Him for the amazing gift of participating in this ministry.

We are grateful for every one of you who partners with us, and we pray that, if God convicts you to participate also, you will trust Him and open yourself to the surprising reality that God is your true Father, and there is nothing you need that He will not provide.

We pray God will bless you beyond all you can ask or imagine. He is faithful!



**"God has used this ministry to open my eyes to the gospel. We are both thankful to the people who make this magazine possible." Brian Cain with his wife Sarah are now members of Trinity Church in Redlands.**

SHARON CAREY

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #18



# Who is The Source

COLLEEN TINKER



**Colleen Tinker** is editor of *Proclamation!* She and her husband Richard lead the weekly Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, where they have been members since leaving Adventism with their two sons in 1999.



## “Where do you find that in the Bible?”

**R**ichard and I sat in our living room, Bibles open in our laps, across from our neighbors Mel and Monica. We had been meeting weekly for several months for Bible study, reading systematically through books of the New Testament. This was not the first time we had encountered this question from Mel as we discussed possible meanings of passages we read.

It was the mid-90’s; Richard and I both were consciously asking God to reveal the meaning of His word to us without an Adventist overlay. We believed we had set aside Ellen White as an interpreter or source of doctrine or belief, yet here we were—once again caught in what we could only call an “Ellen-ism”. The worst part of our predicament was that we had no idea our perceptions were colored by Ellen White—until Mel asked his question.

“Where do you find that in the Bible?”

That night I realized with a sense of embarrassment that we had to give Mel and Monica full disclosure if we were going to continue to study the Bible seriously with them. We had thought such an admission would not be necessary, but to our chagrin we had been wrong.

I looked at Richard and said, “I guess we’d better tell them...”

Richard, looking as uncomfortable as I felt, agreed. We stared a moment at our puzzled neighbors, and then I took a deep breath and said, “Well, we have a prophet...”

I watched their expressions change from puzzled to incredulous as Richard told them about Ellen White. We hastened to assure them that we personally no longer considered her to be authoritative, that we adhered to the Bible only, but we admitted that we kept bumping into presuppositions we didn’t know were unbiblical until we encountered the words of Scripture—or Mel’s relentless question: “Where do you find that in the Bible?”

### Familiar arguments

Before I begin discussing the way Ellen White is used within Adventism, I want to clarify that I know the arguments and rationale Adventists use to justify her position. I not only know them, I used to use many of them. I also know that from an Adventist perspective, these arguments seem plausible—and because Christians in general do not understand her true influence, these Adventist defenses seem convincing on the surface.

For example, we frequently hear variations of these themes: “I don’t need Ellen White to support my beliefs. Everything I believe comes straight from the Bible.” “I don’t read Ellen White, and I don’t need her.” “I don’t believe she was a prophet.” “I don’t use her as a Bible interpreter; she just points me to the Bible.” “She is a great devotional writer like Philip Yancey or Charles Swindoll.” “We don’t expect Jeremiah or Isaiah to be perfect; why should we expect Ellen White to be perfect?” “You’re just reading her out of context!” “She never called herself a

prophet.” “I don’t have to believe in Ellen White to be an Adventist.”

### What the children learn

One of the most telling means of determining what the Seventh-day Adventist Church really believes about Ellen White, however, is to examine the contents of the organization’s children’s books. The Adventist publishing houses and bookstores provide a variety of books for young readers which tell the stories of the early Adventist pioneers, especially Ellen White. One such book, *Grandma Ellen and Me*, is written at an early elementary school level by one of Ellen White’s granddaughters, Mabel R. Miller. Her father was White’s youngest son, Willie. In the chapter “Writing for God” are several statements establishing Ellen White’s authority as God’s “special messenger”:

When she was seventeen, God asked her to be a special messenger to His people. During the rest of her life, God gave her more than two thousand visions. “Write! Write! Write!” her angel kept saying to her. So she did. She wrote for God. When she died in 1915, she had written more than any other woman in history!<sup>1</sup>

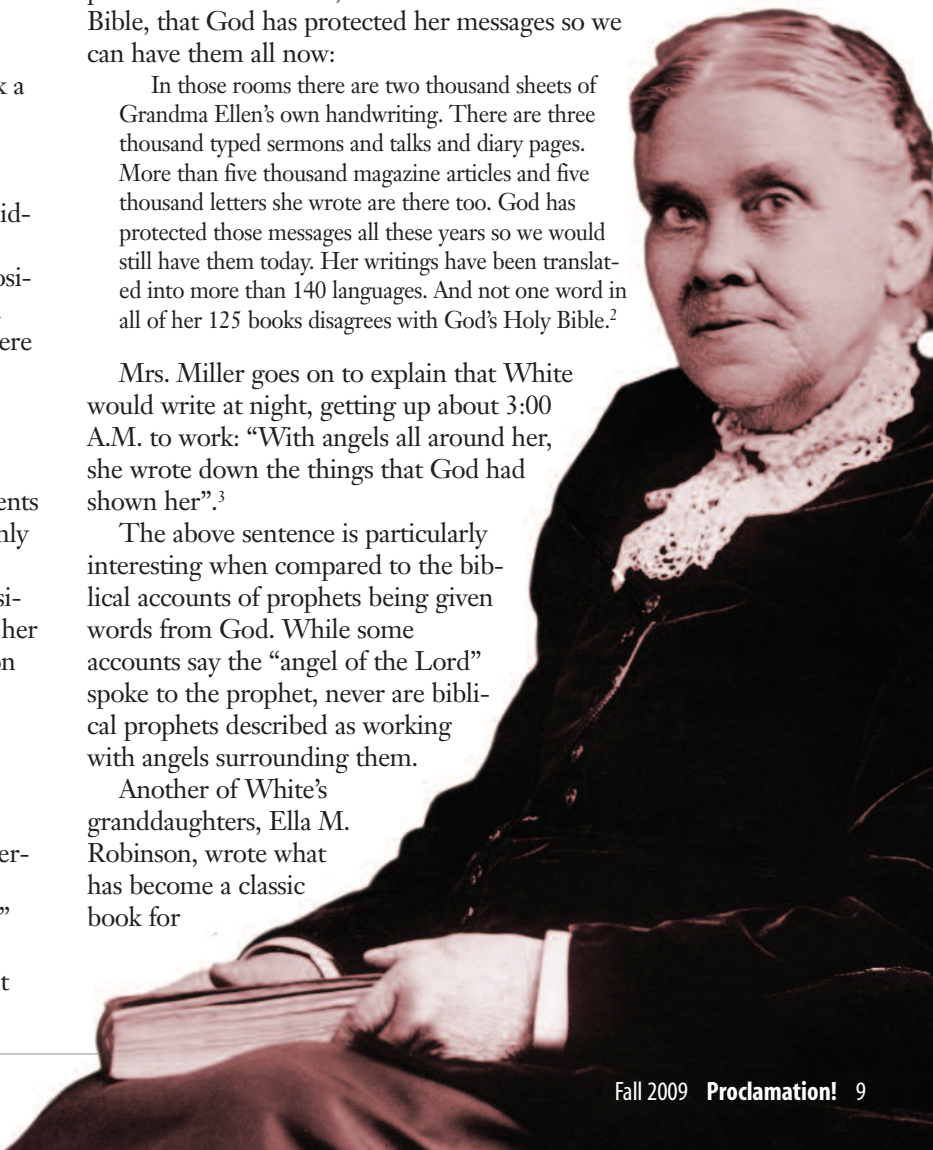
Mabel Miller tells of White’s manuscripts kept safe in fire-proof vaults and claims, as Christians claim for the Bible, that God has protected her messages so we can have them all now:

In those rooms there are two thousand sheets of Grandma Ellen’s own handwriting. There are three thousand typed sermons and talks and diary pages. More than five thousand magazine articles and five thousand letters she wrote are there too. God has protected those messages all these years so we would still have them today. Her writings have been translated into more than 140 languages. And not one word in all of her 125 books disagrees with God’s Holy Bible.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Miller goes on to explain that White would write at night, getting up about 3:00 A.M. to work: “With angels all around her, she wrote down the things that God had shown her.”<sup>3</sup>

The above sentence is particularly interesting when compared to the biblical accounts of prophets being given words from God. While some accounts say the “angel of the Lord” spoke to the prophet, never are biblical prophets described as working with angels surrounding them.

Another of White’s granddaughters, Ella M. Robinson, wrote what has become a classic book for



children ages nine to adult, *Stories of My Grandmother*. She explains that early Adventist pioneer John Loughborough traveled with James and Ellen White for many years and witnessed Ellen in vision nearly fifty times. Ella says of him:

How he loved to tell experiences that he had witnessed with his own eyes on those delightful occasions when heaven seemed to touch earth, and celestial beings came down from the heights of glory to talk with one of God's humble handmaids, to open up mysteries of past and future ages, and to give instruction, counsel, and encouragement for His remnant church who have the "testimony of Jesus," which is "the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)<sup>4</sup>

The above quotation uses the classic Adventist proof texts, Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 to impress upon the young readers that Ellen White is God's prophet foretold in the book of Revelation for God's final true church. The fact is that these two texts which Adventists use to support Ellen White's authority are used out of context and are misinterpreted. Yet using them here, in a book for young children, is particularly revealing; the Adventist organization systematically and intentionally trains children from earliest childhood to perceive Ellen White as a true prophet of God whose existence was prophesied in Revelation and whose words bear the weight of authority carried by the Bible writers.

Mrs. Robinson further recounts a vision Mrs. White had in front of an audience at Battle Creek, Michigan. In this passage her husband James tells the audience how they could know her visions were from God:

To the people watching he said earnestly, "You have all seen that the visions are given to God's messenger today in the same manner in which they were given to His prophets in Bible times... They confirm faith in the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, and in Jesus as the divine Son of God, our only Saviour. They point the way to heaven and warn of dangers along the pathway. They give instruction on how to overcome sin and become like Jesus in character.

"And the final proof of their divine source is that they always agree in every point with the instruction recorded in the Bible, which was given through God's prophets in past ages, and by Jesus Christ and His apostles."<sup>5</sup>

In the final chapter of her book, Mrs. Robinson says of Mrs. White: "Yet it was not Ellen White who did this great work. It was God working through a weak human being using her lips, her voice, her pen, to speak for Him."<sup>6</sup>

Without doubt the intent of this book, which is currently sold in Adventist Book Centers, is to train children to believe that Ellen White is God's voice to them today.

### **The "angel of prophecy"**

Ruth Wheeler wrote the book *His Messenger* in 1939. Revised and copyrighted again in 2001, this book has been a classic children's book teaching Adventist young people about Ellen White's prophetic status for decades.

In her chapter entitled "And God Sent His Angel", Ruth Wheeler sets up an argument that Ellen White was inspired

by the same angel who inspired the Bible prophets. The opening paragraph says:

The angel who spoke to Ellen Harmon in vision has carried God's messages to this earth for thousands of years. We might call him the angel of prophecy, for he is the angel who spoke to the prophets whose revelations of the divine will are recorded in the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

Wheeler continues by naming many people to whom she claims God spoke through His angel, including Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Samuel, and Daniel. She states that Daniel identified the angel who spoke to him in vision as Gabriel. Then she comes to John the Revelator. She explains that John was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos and writes:

While John was there on that rugged island, Gabriel, the angel of prophecy, came and spoke with Him... John called the book that he wrote, The Revelation. He said that it was the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants" the things which would come to pass. Jesus sent this message to John the prophet by His own angel, the messenger angel of prophecy.

Once when Gabriel, the messenger angel, came to John, he showed him in vision the new earth and the tree of life, and the river of life that flows out of the throne of God."<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that Gabriel is never identified in Revelation. First, Jesus appears to John and delivers the first parts of Revelation. Later, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues spoke to John as recorded in Revelation 21:9: "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." In Revelation 22:9, this angel says of himself, as John fell to worship at his feet, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."

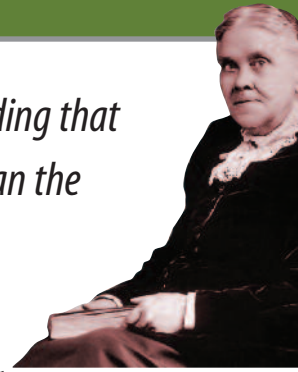
Wheeler quotes this same verse, thus clarifying she is speaking of this same passage, but she overtly names this angel "Gabriel", even though the Bible shows him to be merely one of seven angels holding the seven bowls of plagues. Then she says this:

John, on his barren island, was shown a church that would "keep the sayings of this book," and be waiting to welcome Jesus when He comes. He saw that this church would be keeping the commandments of God, and that it would be different from all others because it would have the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy.

Is it not an inspiring thought that this same angel, who was sent to Daniel, to John, and to the other prophets, to Zacharias, and to Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also sent to Ellen Harmon [White]?<sup>9</sup>

For decades Adventist children have been reading this book, as I did as a child, learning to believe that Ellen White is a prophet inspired exactly the same way the Bible prophets were inspired. Moreover, Adventist children have been learning that Adventism is God's true church of Bible prophecy because, among other things, they have God's only true last-day prophet who received visions from Gabriel.

No matter what Adventists say publicly, internally they overtly teach their children and their members that Ellen White must be respected as a true prophet of God who has the same authority the Bible prophets had.



## *Adventist children grow up understanding that they can no more reject Ellen White than the Bible; the two stand or fall together.*

### Junior Baptismal Guide

The Adventist organization has published several guides for preparing children to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One is entitled *Following Jesus* by Monte Church. It is specifically written “as a tool for pastors working with junior age youth”. (“Junior age youth” range from nine or ten to twelve years of age.) In the chapter entitled “Two Other Ways God Talks To Me”, the theme thought states,

I’m pleased God has given us the writings of Ellen White, not to take the place of the Bible, but to keep me close to the Bible. I’m glad for the way these writings explain in modern-day language the principles of the Bible. I am happy for the way God illustrates His love for me through the beautiful communion service and ordinance of humility.<sup>10</sup>

The author summarizes the importance of Ellen White in these words:

Have you ever heard of the Spirit of Prophecy that the Bible talks about in Revelation 19:10? It simply means that the Holy Spirit has spoken to certain people through the ages and had them write out suggestions and ways we can follow to better understand the Gospel. Moses, Isaiah, and Matthew were people who were led in a special way to speak and write. Ellen White was another person God especially spoke to in this way. We call her writings the Spirit of Prophecy today, too. The reason that so many appreciate and believe in her writings is whenever you read her writings, they always lead you to the Bible and help you understand it more clearly...*Her writings are like a little light that always leads you to the greater light* which is the Bible.

God said He would speak to us through people like Ellen White, especially as we near the time when Jesus will come again.<sup>11</sup>

This passage illustrates the way Adventists teach children about Ellen White. They never claim that she wrote Scripture. Yet they overtly compare her to the writers and prophets of the Bible. They say she was inspired the same way the Bible writers were inspired, and they teach that God has given her to His people in the last days to help them understand the Bible.

It is a technicality to claim that Ellen White did not write Scripture or that she is a “lesser light”. In reality, Adventist children are taught from earliest childhood to understand Ellen White to be a prophetess of God, a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and God’s appointed messenger for these last days to explain the Bible and to tell us how to live. In other words, without Ellen White, we would not understand God’s full intention for us. Her inspiration must be heeded in order to better know the gospel and understand God’s will. Adventist children grow up understanding that they can no more reject Ellen White than the Bible; the two stand or fall together. Together they are God’s provision for godly living.

Adventist children’s worldview is shaped by the belief that Ellen White must be heeded with the same devotion as the Bible.

### Source of truth

No matter what defenses Adventists use publicly to “normalize” Ellen White’s role in Adventism, the fact remains

that the Seventh-day Adventist church has a very clear statement of fundamental belief about her:

Number 18: The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen

G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a **continuing and authoritative source of truth** which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.

They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)<sup>12</sup> (emphasis mine)

In spite of the rather confusing defenses Adventists raise to convince “outsiders” that White is neither canonical nor an official interpreter of Scripture, the specific wording of the statement of belief is careful and intentional.

First, the penultimate sentence of the statement, “As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction,” is eerily similar to 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” Although Fundamental Belief #18 is not a quotation of 2 Timothy 3:16, the structure and content of the two sentences are similar enough that one cannot dismiss the wording as accidental.

Second, Fundamental Belief #18 clearly uses the word “source”: “As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a **continuing and authoritative source of truth**.” The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the noun “source” as follows:

1 a: a generative force: cause; b (1): a point of origin or procurement: beginning; (2): one that initiates: author; also: prototype, model (3): one that supplies information.<sup>13</sup>

Words have standard meanings; we cannot dismiss them because we don’t agree with the meanings or because we think they’re intended to connote something different from usual. In the case of the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief #18, we have to take the words at face value. To be sure, the “source” phrase is immediately followed by a disclaimer: “[The writings of Ellen White] make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.” The result is a dichotomy of double-speak—but again, this dichotomy is intentional.

Adventists know that the Christian faith tolerates no source of doctrinal truth apart from Scripture, and they have taken great pains to be seen as “evangelical”. Simultaneously, Adventists know that the one unique doctrine that defines and authenticates the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s existence—the investigative judgment—cannot stand upon the Bible alone. Although Edson and Crosier helped formulate it, Ellen White’s confirming visions provide the authoritative source of this central doctrine of Adventism.

### Earlier Statement of Belief

In the early 1980's, at least two men's in-depth scholarship threatened to expose Ellen White as unbiblical and a fraud. In 1980 Desmond Ford presented to church leaders gathered in Glacier View, Colorado, his findings proving that the investigative judgment, the one unique doctrine of Adventism, was not supportable from Scripture alone. One can only find this doctrine explained in the writings of White where she uses Daniel 8:14 to identify the investigative judgment. Most of the Adventist scholars present agreed with Ford's findings, but instead of admitting the errors of this doctrine, the Adventist organization covered up Ford's findings and published an article entitled, "Ford Document Studied; Variant Views Rejected" in the *Adventist Review*, Aug. 28, 1980, p. 32.<sup>14</sup>

Close on the heels of Ford's disclosure, Walter Rea published *The White Lie* in 1982. Rea had spent several years researching and comparing White's writings to sources available to her. His findings concluded that a significant percentage of her works were plagiarized from other authors, and some were written by ghostwriters. The publication of Rea's book followed a meeting held January, 1980, where Rea presented his findings to Adventist leaders. They promised to inform the Adventist membership about White's plagiarism. Because they did not keep their promise, Rea published his own book in which he revealed the results of his research.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, church-appointed scholar Fred Veltman spent eight years examining only a portion of *The Desire of Ages*, and he confirmed that significant portions of the section of the book he examined were plagiarized.

Church leaders were aware of both Ford's and Rea's scholarship before their official meetings with them. They knew there were serious charges against Ellen White's reliability, and they knew their own scholars could not affirm that the core doctrine of Adventism, the investigative judgment, was supported by the Bible alone. Because Adventist doctrine and its cultural heritage depended upon the statements and biblical interpretations of Ellen White, they could not renounce her authority and continue to maintain the organization.

A similar dilemma had occurred over 60 years before when, at the 1919 Bible Conference, Adventist church leaders had agreed to ignore the serious concerns many held regarding the validity of Ellen White's inspiration. They sealed the minutes of the conference for 50 years, and they agreed not to rock the denominational boat by addressing the pervasive doubts. When the Adventist leadership chose to rewrite the fundamental belief statement in 1980 instead of openly addressing the serious charges against Ellen White's reliability, they were merely continuing the precedent set by their predecessors.<sup>16</sup>

Prior to 1980, the statement of belief concerning White was worded thus:

19. That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). That the gift of the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identi-

fying marks of the remnant church (1 Cor. 1:5-7; 12:1-28; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; Amos 3:7; Hos. 12:10, 13). They recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.<sup>17</sup>

Importantly, the Adventists' pre-1980 fundamental belief about Scripture stated that the Old and New Testaments "contain an all-sufficient revelation of [God's] will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice."<sup>18</sup>

In other words, prior to 1980 the Adventists' fundamental beliefs stated that Scripture was the "only unerring" and "all-sufficient" revelation of God's will for faith and practice. Concurrently, while they did claim prophetic status for Ellen White, they did not word their fundamental belief in such a way that she was credited with being a source of truth.

When the Adventist organization amended its statements of belief in 1980, it not only amended its statement of Ellen's authority, but it amended its statement concerning Scripture as well. The authors eliminated the words "all-sufficient" and "only unerring rule". The new statement reads in part, "In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history."<sup>19</sup>

The 1980 amended fundamental belief statements coincided closely with the public exposure of serious criticism of Ellen White. The official writers deceptively worded the statements to make it appear they honor Scripture as the only infallible source of doctrine. Simultaneously, however, they strengthened their statement regarding Ellen White, giving her the distinction of being not merely an interpreter of Scripture but also the definer of how both Scripture and her own writings are used, and they made her an actual "source of truth"—an originator of foundational beliefs and "truth" which was not only valid during her lifetime but which is "continuing and authoritative" today.

Concurrently, the statements' authors eliminated the words that declared Scripture to be the only rule of faith and practice and the all-sufficient revelation of God's will.

The amended 1980 statements give Ellen White's writings the same authority as Scripture while weakening the authority of the Bible. The authors camouflaged these amendments with the disclaimer that Scripture is the standard by which teaching and doctrines must be tested, but such a claim is meaningless when they have eliminated the statements of Scripture's absolute authority and have added Ellen White as a source of truth.

Words mean what they say, and the writers of the Fundamental Beliefs chose words that clearly communicate the true nature of Ellen White's authority within the Seventh-day Adventist organization.

### Internal reality

Although Adventism outwardly denies that it holds her writings to be on a par with Scripture, internally they teach their members that Ellen White's inspiration is the same as that of the Bible writers, and they teach their members that she is to be honored as a prophet of God. In practice, they

shape their theology and their worldview on her Scriptural commentary and interpretation.

During the first quarter of 2009, the Adventist Sabbath School lessons were entitled “The Prophetic Gift.” In the introduction to the January/February/March, 2009 *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, author Gerhard Pfandl writes:

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the gift of prophecy has been manifested in the ministry of Mrs. Ellen G. White (1827-1915). For seven decades she gave messages of counsel and warning to our church; and though she died in 1915, her books, full of spiritual insights and counsel, have been a **source** of tremendous blessing to countless millions whose lives have been, and continue to be, spiritually and theologically enriched through them. We truly have been given a gift<sup>20</sup> (emphasis mine).

This “gift” of a prophet who is a “continuing and authoritative source of truth” is not always acknowledged openly. Many Adventists think they don’t follow her instruction but follow the Bible alone. Many others claim they do not believe she is a prophet. A great many Adventists believe she has historical significance but no modern significance. Still others hold her works to be sacred.

The fact is, however, that no matter what individual Adventists claim to believe about her, the organization teaches that she is God’s last-day mouthpiece for them. Moreover, Adventists teach that she has the authority of Bible writers and the authority to interpret Scripture. One of the methods they employ to present Ellen White as authoritative is to suggest that the Bible writers were fallible and have no higher quality of inspiration than she has.

For example, the lesson for March 23, 2009, in the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* states,

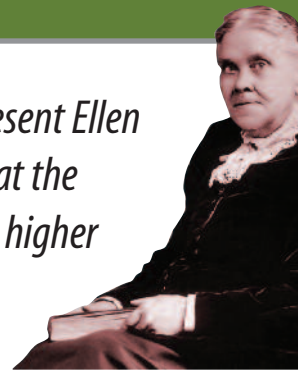
Because Paul preached Christ from Scripture, showing that He was the promised Messiah, those who heard him with an open mind were driven to study the Scriptures for themselves to see if these things were indeed so. In other words, even Paul’s words weren’t good enough. They had to be confirmed by the Bible.<sup>21</sup>

The above quotation refers to Paul’s preaching to the Berean Jews as recorded in Acts 17. In order to validate Ellen White’s supposed inspiration from God, they compare her to Paul with a straw-man argument. The Bereans in Acts 17 who searched the Scriptures after hearing Paul preach did not search them because Paul’s words “weren’t good enough”. In fact, Acts 17: 10-11 states:

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these [the Berean Jews] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

The Bereans searched the Scriptures not because they doubted the word delivered by Paul and Silas but because, in their joy, they wanted to confirm for themselves how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies they knew and loved.

*One of the methods they employ to present Ellen White as authoritative is to suggest that the Bible writers were fallible and have no higher quality of inspiration than she has.*



Moreover, Peter identified Paul’s writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Paul was called by the Lord Jesus as an apostle and given the grace of explaining the mystery of the administration of the new covenant to everyone (Ephesians 3:9). Ellen White was not an apostle, and her words are not validated as Scripture. For the Adventists to compare her writings to Paul’s is disingenuous and designed to confuse members. They defend her authenticity first by diminishing the authority of Paul or of other Bible writers, then by trying to demonstrate that she is just like them.

Two more excerpts from the Sabbath School lessons confirm this point. In the study guide for March 25, 2009, we read:

Among us, as in ancient Israel, there are those who in various ways, subtle and sometimes not so subtle, are working to destroy confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White. It has been that way from the beginning, and we can be sure it will be right up to the end, as well. Just about every charge leveled against her and her works are similar to the charges leveled against the prophets of old and against the Word of God itself.<sup>22</sup>

As with the inspiration of the Bible, questions remain about the manifestation of the prophetic gift in the life of Ellen White. Yet, the gift speaks for itself and gives the best testimony and witness regarding itself...More than enough evidence has been given for anyone to make an informed decision regarding the gift, regardless of the unanswered questions that we who “see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12) might still have.<sup>23</sup>

These straw-man arguments do two things: they undermine the authority of the Bible to Adventist members, and they establish Ellen White as categorically the same as Bible writers. A nineteenth-century “prophet” who is known to have plagiarized liberally and whose writings contradict both themselves and the Bible cannot be compared to the Bible writers.

#### **White contradictions to the Bible**

A prophet of God never contradicts Scripture. Moreover, a biblical prophet is inspired with God’s own words (2 Tim. 3:16). Ellen White claimed to have direct revelations from God, but she often contradicted the words of the Bible.

Following is a small sampling of Ellen White’s statements which contradict the clear words of Scripture.<sup>24</sup>

**White:** Eve yielded to temptation, and through her influence Adam also was deceived” (*Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 352).

**Bible:** And it was not Adam who was deceived but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression (1 Ti. 2:14).

**White:** The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol., 7, p. 136).

**Bible:** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30. See also 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13).

**White:** Let not any of our ministers set an evil example in the eating of flesh meat. Let them and their families live up to the light of health reform (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 36).

**Bible:** And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover [lamb] with you before I suffer (Lk. 22:15).

But the Spirit explicitly says that in latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

**White:** Regarding prayer for the sick: "We should first find out if the sick one has been withholding tithes or has made trouble in the church" (*Healthful Living*, p. 237).

**Bible:** And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill (Mat. 8:16).

### From the pulpit

In spite of her obvious contradiction of Scripture, Adventists have learned to rationalize that she doesn't really disagree with God's word—after all, God Himself spoke to her. Therefore, her words must offer special insight that we must consider as we read Scripture. This reverence for Ellen White as an authoritative mouthpiece for God is not limited to official written statements. Adventist pastors, including well known popular ones, quote her writings from the pulpit to validate their sermon messages. A recent sermon preached in the Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, illustrates Adventists' general acceptance of Ellen White's authority to interpret and explain Scripture.

On May 30, 2009, Bill Santos, the Canadian evangelist for *It Is Written*, a Seventh-day Adventist worldwide evangelistic ministry, presented the Sabbath sermon at the Henderson Highway church. Santos' purpose was to energize the congregation to support *It Is Written's* outreach. He preached on Jesus' parable in Matthew 20 about the landowner who hired workers at the eleventh hour and paid them as much as he paid those he hired at the beginning of the day.

Santos admitted the rationale for paying the workers the same amount seemed unclear, and then he said, "So I decided I'd turn to the 'Spirit of Prophecy' to try to clear some of my confusion, which I think is a good practice."

Ellen White explains that the landowner fired the early workers and hired the eleventh-hour workers to finish the

work, paying them the same amount because the later workers actually completed what the early workers had failed to do.

Then Santos said,

In the parable—in the internal context of this parable—there is no evidence whatsoever that the early workers failed to do their job. There's no evidence of that. There's no condemnation of the early workers—there is no criticism of the early workers—in the immediate, internal context of the parable. But when I turned to the writings of Ellen White, when I began to look at what she wrote, when she opens up this parable, she criticizes the early workers and praises the eleventh-hour people. The immediate internal evidence does not suggest that. *But Ellen White here uses prophetic license. Ellen White was called of God, and Ellen White has the liberty to do with Scripture what you and I do not have the liberty to do.* Let me unfold this parable for you as it appears in the writings of Ellen White.<sup>25</sup> (emphasis mine)

Bill Santos' comments cannot be dismissed as an obscure statement from a provincial pastor. Santos is a high-profile Adventist evangelist whose career is spent preaching evangelistic meetings across Canada and also in the United States with the goal of bringing new members into the Adventist organization. In his public meetings, Santos would not likely make such a revealing statement about Ellen White.

Yet when he preaches to an Adventist audience, Santos is free to claim White's authority to add to Scripture and to interpret Scripture contrary to its clear meaning. He knows his listeners will share his belief in her authority because he and his audience have been shaped by the same internal indoctrination: Ellen White was called by God and authorized to reveal Scripture's true meaning to God's remnant church.

### Official teaching

In spite of Adventism's many public denials of dependence upon Ellen White for doctrine, denominational history confirms that the doctrines' formation depended upon her visions. The facts also confirm that Ellen White was not actually a Bible scholar.

The book *Light Bearers* by Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf is a textbook used at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Originally copyrighted in 1979 by the Department of Education of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, it was revised and copyrighted again in 2000.

This book details the earliest events in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist organization. The authors explain how the founding Adventists reached their doctrinal positions:

They were hammered out as the result of Bible study, discussion, and prayer. Much of the time, Ellen White testified, she could not understand the texts under discussion and the issues involved. Yet she later remembered that when the brethren who were studying "came to the point...where they said, 'We can do nothing more' the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be

given me, with instructions as to how we were to labor and teach effectively.” Because the participants “knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, . . . they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given.”<sup>26</sup>

This passage not only confirms that students at the Adventist seminary are overtly taught the fact that Adventist doctrines were formulated with dependence upon revelations from Ellen White’s visions, but it also confirms that neither Ellen White nor the other founders of the Adventist organization were able to understand the Bible.

Instead of affirming God’s assistance to the founding Adventists, this passage and Ellen’s own admission that she could not understand the passages reveals that she and her colleagues were unable to discern the spiritual truth in Scripture. 1 Corinthians 2 explains that when we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we understand spiritual reality:

“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

Jesus also promised,

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (Jn. 14:26).

The Holy Spirit was not given to the church through the visions of one or even of a few individuals. The Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, and His personal indwelling is the mark of all true believers (Eph. 1:13-14). Each person born of the Spirit is filled with the Holy Spirit, and God teaches and reveals the meanings of Scripture to all who submit their minds and their understanding to Him.

*Light Bearers* reveals not only official Adventist teaching to those who earn theology and divinity degrees from Andrews seminary; it also reveals that neither Ellen White herself nor her colleagues grasped the meaning of Scripture and spiritual truth Jesus promised His followers would have. This textbook further demonstrates that, despite their public assertions, Adventists from the very beginning have depended upon Ellen White’s visions for their understanding of Scripture and their formation of doctrine.

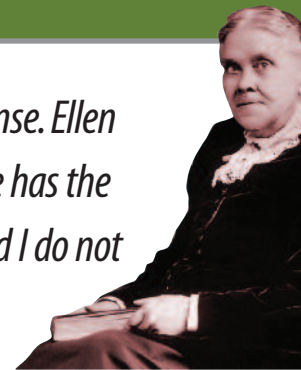
Within Adventism, Ellen White is, indeed, “a continuing and authoritative source of truth”.

### **Walk with integrity**

In conclusion, I appeal to each person reading: if you struggle with cognitive dissonance, with confusion about Ellen White’s importance or true role within the church, ask God to reveal truth to you. If you know there are problems with honoring Ellen White and simultaneously considering the Bible to be God’s revealed word to us, don’t rationalize. Let God show you the supremacy of His word and the pre-tension of the claims of a modern prophet.

If you do not believe that Ellen White ought to be used as a source of doctrine or an authority, but you cling to Adventism because you want to “make a difference”, I ask

*“But Ellen White here uses prophetic license. Ellen White was called of God, and Ellen White has the liberty to do with Scripture what you and I do not have the liberty to do.”*



you to submit your concerns and fears to God. Ask Him to give you the courage to know and walk in truth. Ask the Lord Jesus to remove the deception and blindness which veils the reality of the finished work of Jesus’ cleansing blood on your behalf. Ask Him to be your Lord, your Savior, and ask Him to show you how to embrace the Lord Jesus alone.

Our future is assured when we are in Christ (Col 3:3). He is standing before us, offering His wounds and His resurrection as the only Source of life and reality.

God redeems everything we submit to Him. Hold up to Him your grip, however weak, on any source of truth besides the Triune God and His own word to us.

He is faithful. He will not trick you nor deceive you. In Him is life and peace, and when we are born again of His Spirit, “we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). †

<sup>1</sup>Miller, Mabel, *Grandma Ellen & Me*, Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 2000, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>Robinson, Ella M., *Stories of My Grandmother*, Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., 1967, renewed 1995, pp. 91-92.

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>7</sup>Wheeler, Ruth, *His Messenger*, Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 2001, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup>*ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 44.

<sup>10</sup>Church, Monte, *Following Jesus*, Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 2001, p. 37

<sup>11</sup>*ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed, 2005, Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., Belief #18, p. 247.

<sup>13</sup><http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/source>

<sup>14</sup>Hook, Milton, “Chapter Eleven: Momentous Decisions at Glacier View”, *Desmond Ford*, pub. Adventist Today, pp. 236-260.

<sup>15</sup>Rea, Walter, “Recant, no! I stand firm”, *Proclamation!*, November/December, 2004. Available at

[http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2004\\_NovDec.pdf](http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2004_NovDec.pdf)

<sup>16</sup>1919 Bible Conference Minutes available at <http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=19&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True>

<sup>17</sup>*Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*, 1976, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed, 2005, Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., Belief #1, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>Pfandl, Gerhard, *The Prophetic Gift, Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, January/February/March, 2009, ed. Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, pp. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup>*ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>22</sup>*ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup>*ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>24</sup>For more examples of Ellen White’s contradictions and unscriptural teachings, see *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, fourth revision, 2009, by Dale Ratzlaff.

<sup>25</sup>retrieved from

<http://hendersonhighway22.adventistchurchconnect.org/article.php?id=34>

<sup>26</sup>Schwartz, Richard W., Greenleaf, Floyd, “After The Disappointment”, *Light Bearers*, c. 2000, p. 66.



# God's word or the words of men

**Editor's note:** The January-March, 2009, Sabbath School lessons were entitled *The Prophetic Gift* and comprised an apologetic for Ellen White's inspiration. This article is adapted from the Life Assurance Ministries commentary on the Sabbath School lessons published at BibleStudiesforAdventists.com. Written by Roy Tinker, this article reflects his response to the lessons for week 5: "The Inspiration of the Prophets".

ROY TINKER

**T**he author of the first quarter *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for January-March, 2009, Gerhard Pfandle, opens the lessons for the fifth week by posing several questions including: "What does it mean when we say that the Bible is inspired?" "What is the difference between inspiration and revelation? What is the difference between verbal and thought inspiration?"

The questions of the mechanics of how the Bible was inspired and whether it can be taken as the inerrant word of God, without error in the original manuscripts, are essential and foundational. We'll begin by looking at what the Bible says about itself. If we are to accept the Bible in any way, we must accept it on its own terms, not on our terms.

There is no middle ground regarding Biblical inspiration and interpretation: we can either accept or reject what the Bible says about itself. In doing so, we either accept or reject the Bible itself.

Before we think about the inspiration of the Scriptures, it is important to know the purpose of Scripture. Hebrews 1:1-2 says:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, who He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Hebrews was written primarily to Jewish Christian believers who were familiar with the Old Testament. Let's pull some observations out of the passage: God spoke long ago to the fathers (referring to men who lived long ago—men of Israel). God spoke to these fathers in the prophets—meaning that the prophets themselves communicated God's word to the fathers. God spoke in the prophets in many portions and in many ways. God has spoken to us in these last days in His Son (identified as Jesus Christ later in the book of Hebrews).

The writer of Hebrews is clearly drawing a contrast between God's manner of speaking in the prophets and his manner of speaking in Jesus Christ:



Prophets	Jesus Christ
Long ago	In these last days
To the fathers	To us
In many portions and in many ways	Implied: In one portion and in one way

While God spoke in various ways through the prophets in the past, he spoke finally to us through His Son. How are we to respond to God's speaking, both in the prophets and in His Son?

God the Father Himself has given us the answer, verbally, to remove all questions and make His intent and our obligation eminently clear. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus appeared in glory with Moses and Elijah, the figureheads of the Old Testament (symbolizing the Law and the Prophets, respectively, which collectively constitute the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures), Peter wanted to make Jesus equal to Moses and Elijah:

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Matt. 17:4).

But God spoke clearly to them:

While he [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matt. 17:5)

God the Father identifies Jesus as His beloved Son, a title given to no one else. He also gives us a command: "listen to Him!" In the presence of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, through whom God had revealed Himself to His people, God the Father says of Jesus, "listen to Him!" The Father's command to listen to Jesus correlates to Jesus' title as the beloved Son of God the Father. We are to listen to Jesus, over against anyone else, because Jesus has this title, which is elsewhere referred to as the "name that is above every name" (see Phil. 2:5-11). No one else has a name or title as high as Jesus, the beloved son of God the Father; therefore, we are not to listen to anyone else over against Jesus himself.

Now that we have clarified both how God has spoken to us and how we are to respond, let's examine God's purpose in speaking to us. The following passage is from Jesus' last public statement before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion as recorded in John's gospel:

And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me" (Jn. 12:44-50).

We learn these things:

**God reveals himself to us in Jesus:** "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me." To believe in Jesus is to believe in God the Father. Jesus says elsewhere, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

**God shines His light on us in Jesus.** John says in his epistle, "God is light. In him there is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5). Light is a symbol of truth. Elsewhere, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn. 14:6). Jesus himself is truth personified; thus, He Himself is the light of God that "shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (see Jn. 1:1-14).

**Jesus came to save the world.** In chapter 3, Jesus says of Himself: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world..." (Jn. 3:18-19).

God's primary purposes in speaking through Jesus His Son are to reveal Himself, to reveal truth, and to saving faith.

What about God's purposes when He spoke "long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways?" First, it's important to note that the primary purpose of the Old Testament, both the Law and the prophets, is to point forward to Jesus, who is God's full and final word to man. The theme of the Law and the Prophets pointing to Christ is repeated throughout the New Testament. Here are a few examples:

"For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John" (Matt. 11:13 – see the context for more information).

John was the greatest of the prophets until his time, because he pointed to Jesus and directly testified to him:

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29).

The prophets before John "made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Pet, 1:10-11), but John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb and recognized Mary, pregnant with Jesus, even before he was born. Moreover, he directly witnessed Jesus, and he testified to Him.

"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Gal. 3:24-25).

The law here refers to the old covenant law given to Israel at Sinai, as opposed to the new covenant, which is given to believers in Christ (See Heb. 9).

"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe..." (Rom. 3:21).

"Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col. 2:16-17).

Perhaps Isaiah 55 most beautifully sums up God's redemptive purposes in speaking to us. God speaks tenderly and compassionately to those he loves:

Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David (Is. 55:3).

The Bible is clear; we must accept the Bible on its own terms. Jesus is God's full and final revelation of Himself to us. Moreover, God the Father commands us to listen to Jesus over against everyone else. The Law and the Prophets point to Jesus; that is their primary purpose. Ultimately, God's purposes in speaking are to reveal Himself, to reveal truth in Jesus, and to save those who believe in Jesus. These purposes are identical to the purposes of the Bible.

### The authority of God's word

In the Sabbath School lessons Pfandl attempts to differentiate between thought inspiration and word inspiration.<sup>1</sup> He attempts to distinguish between the two, deriving a strained distinction from Ellen White's own words:

Revelation: the Holy Spirit revealed truth to prophets via "visions and dreams, symbols and figures".<sup>2</sup>

Inspiration: prophets interpreted what they were given and "embodied the thought in human language"<sup>3</sup> while being "moved upon by the Holy Ghost", thus creating words of Scripture.

The Bible is not in "grand superhuman language", but rather in "the language of men." Therefore, the Bible is imperfect, since "Everything that is human is imperfect".<sup>4</sup> (Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 945).

These teachings are designed to devalue the Bible, and they disagree with what the Bible says about itself. Moreover, they disagree with what the Bible says about prophetic revelation.

In Deuteronomy 18, God speaks to Moses regarding prophets he would later send to Israel:

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him (Deut. 18:18-19).

In this text we see that God himself "will raise up a prophet." No one will raise himself or someone else as a prophet; this work belongs to God alone. Further, God will put His words in the prophet's mouth, and the prophet will speak God's words in obedience to God's command. Finally, the prophet will speak God's words in God's name, and therefore in God's authority (but also in submission to God's authority, since he is acting in obedience to God's command). God Himself will hold accountable those who do not listen to His words.

Just as we are commanded by God the Father to listen to Jesus and are held accountable for listening to Him, God held the Israelites accountable for listening to His words spoken through the prophets of old. Just as Jesus' words were not His own, so the words the prophets spoke were not their own:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever

made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

To Jeremiah God said,

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. For behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it'" (Jer. 30:1-3).

We see that the written words of God are just as authoritative as the spoken words of God. Scripture is clear regarding the words of God:

The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times (Ps. 12:6).

As for God, His way is blameless;

The word of the LORD is tried;

He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him (Ps. 18:30).

For the word of the LORD is upright,

And all His work is done in faithfulness (Ps. 33:4).

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,

And by the breath of His mouth all their host (Ps. 33:6).

Forever, O LORD,

Your word is settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89).

Clearly, God's words are as perfect and holy and unchanging and unfailing and powerful as God Himself. As Jesus says: "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matt. 12:34). God's heart is expressed and revealed in His words, and to assign any flaw to His words, no matter his vehicle of speaking, would be to assign flaw to God Himself.

A question arises: what about places in the Bible where God is not being directly quoted? Paul addresses the authority of Scripture as a whole:

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible is indeed trustworthy. It is the words of God, spoken through men, but in no way imperfect or diluted. We can put our full trust and hope in the words of God, for they are just as trustworthy as God Himself is.

### Textual criticism or submission to the word

The Adventist viewpoint is that the thoughts of Scripture, not the words, are inspired ("except when the words of God or an angel are quoted, or when God speaks directly through a prophet" *The Prophetic Gift*, p. 56). This teaching devalues Scripture and sets up a false dichotomy between verbal and thought inspiration. The real issue is whether the Bible is inerrant and whether it is authoritative. Again, we must accept the Bible on its own terms as stated in 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scriptures is paramount and foundational to the Christian faith. If there is any belief that the Scriptures are unreliable, then we have license to come to Scripture without submitting ourselves to it. The

doctrine of “thought inspiration” subtly introduces the possibility that errors exist in the Scriptures. Whether each word is inspired, and whether some words could have been changed, is the wrong question and a dangerous direction of thinking. If “all Scripture is inspired by God,” then the whole body of Scripture constitutes God’s word to us, and our proper response is not to question it, but to “tremble at His word,” listen to it, and submit ourselves to it.

The Adventist discussions of inspiration have a particular agenda: to convince people that Ellen White is a true prophet inspired the same way the biblical prophets were inspired. They appeal to her physical phenomena and paranormal manifestations, but false prophets throughout Scripture displayed signs and wonders. These things are not an authoritative indication of truth or falsehood. Rather, the New Testament gives us stern warnings to watch out for false prophets.

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves (1 Pet. 2:1).

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1).

There are two tests for truth for any system of belief: correspondence to reality, and internal consistency. Applied to Ellen White’s writings, the tests become these two questions:

1. Do her writings contradict Scripture in any way?
2. Do her writings contradict themselves in any way?

As we consider these questions, remember the promises of God regarding truth and our relationship to it:

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn. 8:31-32).

This text explicitly describes our marching orders: to continue in His word. This is the ongoing activity of true discipleship. If we do so, we will know the truth. The truth will make us free. (Conversely, lies put us in bondage—and these bonds are what truth breaks when it makes us free.) We are to put our faith in Jesus, and our hope is to be rooted in God and in Jesus (see Heb. 11:6 and Matt. 11:28-30).

God’s word to us declares that Jesus Himself is the way: He will lead us as our shepherd. Jesus not only made the way open for us to come to God through His death and resurrection, He will continue to be our Way throughout all eternity. We will never be without Jesus and will never come to God apart from Him (Heb. 7:24-25).

Scripture further reveals that Jesus Himself is the truth. Therefore, anything false necessarily contradicts or denies Jesus. Conversely, anything that contradicts or denies Jesus is false. To know Jesus is to know the truth. To love Jesus is to love the truth (and conversely, to love the truth is to love Jesus). Furthermore, Jesus Himself is the life. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (Jn. 1:4). There is no other source of life. To know Him is to truly live. “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us under-

standing, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:20).

## Conclusion

When Adventists compare Ellen White and Bible writers, the comparison is contrived and designed to distract from the important issue of whether or not Ellen White’s writings are true. There are two tests for truth: correspondence to reality (Do Ellen White’s writings contradict Scripture in any way?) and internal consistency (Do Ellen White’s writings contradict themselves in any way?). Jesus is the truth; we are to put our faith in Him, and if we continue in His word, the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth, and we will be set free.

Finally, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy that God would raise up a prophet to speak His words. Jesus is more than a prophet; He is the Son of God. His words are God’s words to us: words of truth, comfort, instruction, and life. We must heed the words of Jesus, and we will be held accountable for listening to Him. His written word is to be our only source of truth; additional writings and prophets claiming present truth or revelation for today must be rejected.

Let us come to Jesus and listen to Him. This is the *one thing* that is necessary. †

**For further information on the reliability of Scripture:** Sermons by Dr. Gary Inrig: “The God Who Speaks”, October 11, 2009; “The Savior and the Scripture”, October 18, 2009; “God-Breathed,” October 25, 2009; “Here I Stand”, November 1, 2009; “Essential Equipment”, November 8, 2009; “The Spirit and the Word”, November 15, 2009. Available at: <http://trinityonline.org/cgi-bin/MediaList.cgi?section=&category=>

<sup>1</sup>Pfandl, Gerhard, *The Prophetic Gift, January, February, March, 2009 Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>White, Ellen, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>White, Ellen, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 945, quoted from *Ellen G. White Notes for the Sabbath School Lessons, January-March, 2009*, Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD.

**Roy Tinker** is a software engineer at Environmental Systems Research Institute in Redlands, California and attends Trinity Church where he is a keyboardist on a worship team and also leads a small group Bible study. He and his fiancée Adrienne Halpin are planning a June wedding.



# Are you **standing** in the place of God?

YEN CRESS

**Y**ou may have heard it said, “Jesus is our example.” When we look closely at this claim, however, we find some inherent problems.

If Jesus is our example, are we expected to be able to live sinless lives? Should we not get married because He didn’t? Ought we to raise the dead as we travel from town to town? Because Jesus is our example, are we to conclude, as many of us learned, that we “stand in the place of God” to our younger-than-the-age-of-accountability children, teaching them what God is like by our example to them, expecting from them explicit obedience as to God Himself?

## **Example or Substitute**

Jesus did demonstrate a life lived blamelessly before God. We, however, are born into sin from a long line of other sinners, and thus we are inevitably doomed to be sinful ourselves. The fact that we are promised forgiveness does not imply that we will or can live sinlessly from now on. Indeed, we will go on sinning and needing forgiveness until Jesus returns.

Romans 8:10-11 describes this reality: “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

In other words, the perfection of Jesus is an ideal that no other human ever has or ever will reach while this earth lasts. The good news, though, is that God gives us His own life when we accept Jesus even though we still have sinful flesh.

Jesus is our Savior! Rather than being merely our example, He is our Substitute bearing the guilt of our inevitable sins, sacrificing Himself so that we might escape the eternal punishment we deserve. As holy God and perfect Man, He was

the only one who could atone for us, taking the punishment that we all deserve, so that we can look forward to life eternal in a sinless state. Aspiring to this future means continuing to deepen in our relationship with Him, studying His word, and letting Him guide us every moment, but it in no way implies that we can achieve perfect sinlessness here and now. To harbor any illusions that we can become worthy of salvation through imitating Jesus is to blaspheme His whole life and death. The same is true if we willingly persist in sin.

Furthermore, we are not expected necessarily to imitate His miracles. Yes, through His power we may be able to do extraordinary things, but 1 Corinthians 12:4-12 explains that God does not give all of His children the same gifts. Rather, He distributes them to each believer according to His will. While we all receive the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), we will not all do the same things for Him. Performing miracles is not the evidence that we are saved. Jesus is our Savior and Substitute, the One we worship and honor. He is not primarily our example.

## **Parents as stand-ins for God**

Supposing that we can live by following Jesus’ example leads us to a type of grandiosity and away from the humility that comes from knowing we are in complete debt to Him for His sacrifice for us. This misunderstanding is especially damaging when we believe, as Ellen White taught, that parents stand in the place of God to their children.

At birth infants have no concepts at all, but they are created to be able to begin comprehending trust, love, honesty, faith, and kindness. They are not like jellyfish, without mind or spirit. As they grow they will be continually developing their concepts of the world around them. As pre-toddlers, they can begin to understand, in simple ways, the weightiest of matters. They begin to learn to control their tempers, their voices, their loyalties, and their desires.



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Little ones  
need their  
parents as  
human parents,  
and they need  
God as God!

One day a child about one year old demonstrated to me this early comprehension of abstract values. I watched as the tiny boy, not yet walking, curiously observed a blind child his own age sitting nearby. The sighted child watched for a few minutes, then he crawled away. He crawled back moments later with a small toy which he placed gently in the lap of the blind child. Even at his age, that child had an understanding of kindness.

Although babies and very young children may not comprehend God and His will, their parents, being human and thus imperfect, should never imagine that they “stand in the place of God” to their children, as Ellen White has stated:

Parents stand in the place of God to their children, and they will have to render an account, whether they have been faithful to the little few committed to their care. Parents, some of you are rearing children to be cut down by the destroying angel, unless you speedily change your course, and be faithful to them. God cannot cover iniquity, even in children. He cannot love unruly children who manifest passion, and He cannot save them in the time of trouble. Will you suffer your children to be lost through your neglect? Unfaithful parents, their blood will be upon you, and is not your salvation doubtful with the blood of your children upon you?—children who might have been saved had you filled your place, and done your duty as faithful parents should.<sup>1</sup>

Little ones need their parents as human parents, and they need God as God! Moreover, God is not helpless to reveal Himself even to infants. Luke tells the story of John the Baptist, still in his mother’s womb, who leaped in recognition when Mary, pregnant with Jesus, came into his mother Elizabeth’s presence (Luke 1:39-45).

The humility that God requires leaves no room for any person to entertain so much as a hint that he or she can ever “stand in the place of God” to another. It is God who saves parents,

and it is God, not parents, who saves children. Believing parents can trust that God, their heavenly Father, interacts directly with their children just as He did with the still-unborn John the Baptist, and just as He does with each adult.

Parents’ responsibilities include teaching their young ones that only God is perfect and that even “big people” are imperfect and in need of God’s grace and forgiveness. To take any other position may give children a false idea of the character of God.

Most of all, parents need to teach their children from an early age that they can talk with God, that when they need help they can go to Him. They need to teach their children that Jesus died for their sin and that He asks them to accept His sacrifice for them. They need to know that when they ask the Lord Jesus for forgiveness, He will forgive them. They need to know they can trust God and that God loves them.

Praise God, none of us ever stands in the place of God for another. He alone is God, and He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:27). †

<sup>1</sup>*Review and Herald*, March 28, 1893 par. 4. Retrieved from <http://www.egw-text.WhiteEstate.org/cgibin/egw2html?C=118067291&K=193041102010903170>

**Yen Cress** attended Golden Gate Academy in Oakland, California, and Pacific Union College. After her marriage failed, she left Adventism, began teaching English as a second language, and embraced Buddhism. Jesus eventually led her to Himself, however, through singing and worshiping with a variety of Christian congregations. In 2007 He arranged a happy connection for her with Former Adventist Fellowship and Trinity Church in Redlands, California. She has three children and nine grandchildren.



# SUMMER 2009

## Tour of Encouragement (Remembering)

This summer's "Tour of Encouragement" impacted Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff and Richard and me profoundly in a variety of ways. On one level, we all enjoyed the break from our respective Southwest desert habitats in Arizona and Southern California. Beginning with the beautiful Sierra Nevada mountains in northern California, moving through golden southern Oregon, the cornfields of Nebraska, the fireflies and forests of Michigan and Ohio, and ending in the humid but verdant rolling hills of Alabama, we drank in the green that our country's heartland unfolded before us as we drove farther and farther east.

On another level, the ministry impact of this Tour has marked us indelibly. First, we were mutually encouraged at every stop as we met and shared with brothers and sisters in Christ, many of whom we had never met previously but who shared the bond of the Holy Spirit and the reality of the true gospel. Second, the receptivity of the evangelicals at every venue both surprised and encouraged us. More and more people in the Christian community are becoming aware that Adventism is not the same as "regular" Christianity, and there is increasing openness to knowing how to understand and minister to the Adventists who venture to visit Christian churches.

We will share highlights of the Tour in a journal format to help keep the six-week trek organized.

### June 9, 2009

Exactly 100 people attended the opening meeting of the Tour of Encouragement held in the First Baptist Church in Auburn, California, close to the capital city of Sacramento and just a few miles from Amazing Facts-owned Weimar Institute. The meeting opened with two praise songs led by a team provided by the church. Richard and I told our faith story, and then Dale gave his talk on the 10 ways Adventism differs from evangelical Christianity. At the end, Dale, Carolyn, and I answered questions submitted from the audience, and Richard moderated the Q & A. Dale gave away copies of his book *The Truth about Adventist "Truth"* to all who attended.

### June 10, 2009

This was Dale and Carolyn's 52nd wedding anniversary. After Carolyn shared her faith story at the beginning of the evening meeting, Dale reminisced that almost exactly 52 years ago to the hour, his bride walked down the aisle. He called her forward and pinned an orchid onto her dress; Carolyn was overcome. After the meeting we held a small reception for them and for all those who attended the meeting that night (again about 100 people, a large percentage of whom were pastors and members of local Christian churches). Dale's talk, "What About the Fourth Commandment?" was a powerful presentation of the new covenant and the truth of

1. Amusement overcame us when we turned off the freeway into Lincoln, NE, and were confronted by these signs.



2. Richard and Colleen in the entrance hall of the library at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.



3. Pastor Gaylen Smith with Richard Tinker at the Auburn First Baptist Church in Auburn, California.



4. Chris Lee, the organizer of our meetings in Lincoln, NE, and the leader of the local Former Adventist Life Group at Berean Bible Church.



5. Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff relax in Chris and Carmen Lee's home after the last meeting at the Lincoln Berean Bible Church.



our rest in Christ. It was the perfect conclusion to his afternoon talk which he delivered to an audience of local pastors and former Adventists: “The Sabbath Trap” and “The Transitional Path” in which he explained the former Adventist’s confusion and deep need for inductive Bible study.

### June 12–13, 2009

Dale and Carolyn continued north to Roseburg, Oregon. Several local evangelicals and former Adventists attended the meetings held at Foundation Fellowship (formerly First Baptist Church). Additionally, several attendees who had never been Adventist but who participate on the online forum at [www.FormerAdventist.com](http://www.FormerAdventist.com) drove from as far away as Battle Ground, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, to meet Dale and Carolyn and each other.

Dale delivered the same talks that he gave at Auburn, and people were responsive. One Calvary Chapel pastor told Dale that he had never understood the new covenant that clearly, and he would henceforth be teaching it to his congregation.

### June 26, 2009

The opening meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska, held at 7:00 PM in the youth chapel at Berean Bible Church, had a turnout of 300–350 people. There was a significant number of Adventists present including several people that appeared to be students at Union College. Local former Adventist Patria Rector led two worship songs, and Richard and I gave our faith story. Dale’s talk on the major differences between Adventism and evangelical Christianity was well-received, and the Q & A session after the talk was animated. The panel members included Dale, local senior pastor Bryan Clark, Chris Lee, and me with Richard moderating.

When asked why he was hosting these meetings so close to Union College, an Adventist institution, Pastor Clark responded that when the first “wave” of Adventists came to his church about

2003 and began asking him questions, it took him at least six months to begin to understand their questions, let alone their beliefs. He said that the Bible gives a mandate that every person be fully equipped in Scripture to be able to give an answer when asked, and he was hosting these meetings so his congregation could be equipped to give biblical answers to Adventist questions.

### June 27, 2009

On Saturday the first meeting was at 10:00 AM and had about 60–80 people in attendance. Patria Rector told her faith story, and Dale presented his “Sabbath Trap” and “Transitional Path” talks.

The crowd swelled for the evening meeting. Chris Lee, leader of the local Former Adventist Life Group Bible study at Lincoln Berean, presented a powerful short talk on Ephesians 2 before Dale gave his final presentation on Sabbath being realized in Christ and appealed to the audience to embrace the faith of Abraham and be counted righteous.

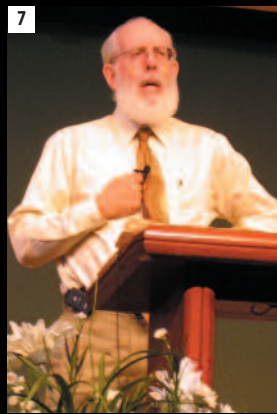
The local former Adventists met at the Lee’s house afterward for a potluck supper. One young woman who had driven to Lincoln from Iowa came also. When Chris prayed over the food that evening, she suddenly realized that there were people who were devoting their lives to helping people like her to find freedom in Jesus. The Holy Spirit used that moment to awaken new life in her.

“I can’t believe this is real,” she kept saying. “I feel as if I was converted tonight. I have passed from death to life!”

### July 3, 2009

Two visits make this day memorable: a walk around the lake at Michigan’s Adventist Camp Au Sable, and a visit to Battle Creek’s Adventist Heritage Village.

Our guide at the Heritage Village was a young woman who is a junior at Andrews University this year. Most impacting to me were the Parkhill Church, the actual building in which Ellen White



6. The paper-mache rendering of the seven-headed beast of Revelation 13 stands on display in the heritage library on the campus of Andrews University. It was commissioned in 1906 by evangelist W. W. Simpson.

7. Paul Carden opened the first meeting at The Chapel in St. Joseph, Michigan.

8. Colleen Tinker and Carolyn Macomber stand in the schoolhouse in the Battle Creek Heritage Village, reminiscing that they met in an Adventist school

when Carolyn was in junior high and Colleen, having just graduated from Walla Walla College, taught there.



9. Richard and Colleen Tinker on the shore of Lake Michigan.

10. Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff took a ride on a Mississippi River taxi with Richard and Colleen Tinker.

received her Civil War vision prior to the war's outbreak, James and Ellen White's house in which Ellen first wrote out the Great Controversy vision, and a reconstruction of the meeting house in which Ellen delivered the Great Controversy vision from memory, a two-hour feat.

By the time we reached that final meeting house, I was emotional. The impact of Ellen White and the lifestyle and culture that had shaped me as a child overwhelmed me, and fighting tears, I asked our guide if she ever wondered why so many thousands of Christians who live for and love the Lord are never convicted of the Sabbath,

Richard told her that we were former Adventists, that we produce a magazine for former Adventists, and that we have found that Ellen White and the Bible do not agree. Our friend who was with us stepped to the podium and turned to Hebrews 1:1-4 in the Bible resting there, reading to her that God speaks to us in these last days through His Son. This, she said, is why she had decided that she, too, was leaving the Adventist church, and she prayed right then for our guide.

### July 7, 2009

Paul Carden from the Centers for Apologetics Research joined us, our friend, and Esther Aust, who was the point person for organizing the St. Joseph meetings, for a tour of the Battle Creek Heritage Village. Our guide this day was a young man about to begin Andrews as a freshman. When we finally got to the same meeting house where we had spoken with the young woman the previous Thursday, Paul asked our guide how he would explain salvation. The boy was thrown off guard and floundered. Paul didn't relent, although he was very kind. He asked him if he believed he had to do anything to ensure being saved, if he was obligated to keep the Sabbath, and if Jesus was enough. The young man was uncomfortable and admitted he had to do something to be saved.

11. Rick and Sheryl Barker helped organize the meetings at Miamisburg, Ohio.



12. The Q & A panel at The Chapel Evangelical Free Church in St. Joseph, Michigan, was composed of Paul Carden, Colleen Tinker, Pastor Phil Bubar, Dale Ratzlaff, and was moderated by Richard Tinker.



13. Ken Christman, one of the organizers of the Miamisburg, Ohio, meetings, took us on a tour of Kettering Medical Center.



14. Dale taught an impromptu class on the state of the dead at Miamisburg where the attendees were almost all former Adventists.



When Paul was satisfied that the guide could not articulate the gospel, our friend (as she had the previous week) went to the podium Bible and turned pages—this time to 1 John 5:11-12 and asked him to read it out loud.

When he finished, Paul asked him to read the next verse: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

The young man's face changed, softening.

"May we pray for you?" our host asked.

Paul prayed for him, putting his arm around the boys' shoulders, and when he finished, the boy was crying.

The first meeting that evening at the St. Joseph Evangelical Free Church known as The Chapel was well-attended. Paul Carden opened the meeting with a talk entitled "The Apostolic Imperative", and Dale presented his talk on the differences between Adventism and evangelical Christianity. Around 250 people attended, mostly with a smattering of Adventists and some former—all attentive with good questions during the Q & A. The panel was composed of Paul Carden, local senior pastor Phil Bubar, Dale Ratzlaff, and me, with Richard Tinker moderating.

### July 8, 2009

After the morning meeting in The Chapel, we took Paul Carden and Jim Valentine from Christian Apologetics and Research Information Services in Milwaukee, WI, on a tour of Andrews University campus, spending time at the "Garden of Grace" built outside the Pioneer Memorial Church.

We also spent some time in the heritage room in the basement of the James White Library. Especially impressive is the large (one wall long) glassed-in collection of books which comprises Ellen White's personal library.

As Richard said, "What 19th century woman (or man, for that matter) would have had a library such as this?"



The final meeting in the evening again drew a crowd of about 250 people, mostly evangelicals, and Pastor Phil Bubar stated that he planned to start a Former Adventist Fellowship study group in the fall. (This group is now meeting every Sunday evening.)

## July 9–11, 2009

We arrived in Miamisburg, Ohio, on Thursday night. The next morning our host, Ken Christman, took us on a tour of Kettering hospital. In contrast to Loma Linda University, Kettering has contracts with a local coffee company which operates coffee shops in the hospital, and the cafeterias in the hospital serve meat.

Ken had organized the Miamisburg meetings with the help of Rick and Sheryl Barker who co-lead a local Former Adventist Bible study. Because the pastoral staff of the hosting church were away on a mission trip, the local evangelicals had not received the same kinds of personal invitations they had received in the other venues. Nevertheless, each meeting had about 35 people in attendance, almost all former Adventists. In spite of the small size, the meetings were warm and very encouraging.

Because of the smaller crowd and the predominance of former Adventists, Dale changed his second presentation to include a powerful Bible study on the state of the dead.

We also enjoyed a wonderful lunch organized by Cheryl Barker in the atrium of a local mall. We had a memorable time visiting with former Adventists, both local and some who had driven from nearby states. Many of us finally put faces to the personalities we already knew from the online forum at FormerAdventist.com.

## August 4-5, 2009

The Whitesburg Baptist Church under the pastoral leadership of Dr. Jimmy Jackson hosted Dale's meetings in Huntsville, AL, just a few miles from the campus of the Seventh-day Adventist Oakwood University.

The first night opened with a crowd of about 150 people; perhaps one third of the attendees were Adventists. This crowd was less responsive than previous audiences at other Tour venues had been; while individually many people talked with us and expressed gratitude, the audience as a whole was less responsive—with the exception of a couple of people who tended to be argumentative and tried to ignore our regulation that all questions for the Q & A panel be written on cards.

The second night was smaller—perhaps 80 people—with fewer Adventists present. As always, Dale's presentation on Sabbath in Christ and the faith of Abraham was powerful and convicting.

We learned after the last meeting was over that the regional conference communications director had emailed all the local Adventist pastors to schedule "alternative events" such as fasting and prayer meetings or community inviter events to convene at the same times as Dale's meetings. It further instructed the pastors to tell the "inquisitive ones" who would attend Dale's meetings anyway to observe without getting into dialog.

In summary, we want to thank all those who organized the meetings at the different venues: Dorene and Jim Arbogast in Auburn, CA; Merwyn Rhoades of Steering Wheel Ministries and Foundation Fellowship in Roseburg, OR; Chris and Carmen Lee in Lincoln, NE; Esther Aust in St. Joseph, MI; Ken Christman and Sheryl Barker in Miamisburg, OH; and Ken and Janice Brantley in Huntsville, AL. In addition, we are grateful to the local pastors who hosted us: Gaylen Smith at Auburn First Baptist Church, Bryan Clark at Lincoln Berean Bible Church, Phil Bubar at The Chapel in St. Joseph, and Jimmy Jackson at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville.

We thank all of you who prayed for this summer Tour, and we thank God for the growing understanding of Adventism in the Christian community. Our Father is faithful. †



15. Carolyn Ratzlaff managed the book tables at the Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, as she did at every venue.

16. Richard Tinker, Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff, and Ken and Janice Brantley do last-minute planning over lunch in the community center of the Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama.

17. The Q & A panel at the Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, included senior pastor Jimmy Jackson, Colleen Tinker, pastor Earla Lockhart, Keavin Hayden, Dale Ratzlaff, and was moderated by Richard Tinker.

18. Richard Tinker hung a "FREE" sign over the *Proclamation!* table at Huntsville.

**It is my desire that every person who reads this would be able experience what it means to live in this type of liberty with the veil removed. Often, the very thing that hinders us from removing the veil is that we want to hide behind it to protect our own presuppositions and theological house.**

# SABBATH VEIL REMOVED

DALE RATZLAFF

**A**fter the Apostle Paul discussed the differences between the old and new covenants in 2 Corinthians 3, he made this insightful statement about the Christians who were focused on old covenant law.

“But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:14-17).

The many questions we were asked during our recent “Tour of Encouragement” and the many letters and emails we have received after returning have reinforced to me that one cannot see through the veil. Over and over again the same questions came up, and as we gave Bible references for what we believe to be truth, many people were not able to accept what these verses state. The Bible texts are simply brushed aside as if the verses were not there. What the Bible clearly states did not even penetrate their thinking. Often the response is, “It couldn’t mean that because...” and then the questioner will bring some other “truth” in their “paradigm of truth” to which the Bible text in question disagrees. If you have read *Truth Led Me Out* or listened to my description of the seven-month study we did on the topic of the Sabbath you will know that I experienced the same thing in my study. I still remember the day I decided to take the texts that did not fit my paradigm at face value without trying to explain them away by my previous understanding of truth. Suddenly I saw a whole new system of truth that was beautiful, where all the pieces fit together, and Christ was at the center! The veil was removed!

#### **Sabbath texts with which I have wrestled**

I am going to give a few examples of some of the verses on the topic of the Sabbath, and I have wrestled hard with each one of these myself.

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ (Col. 2:16, 17).

I believe this verse has the Seventh-day Sabbath in view. It is clear beyond the shadow of doubt to me now, but there was a time when, like many of our questioners, I simply could not make it fit. I, as do the questioners now, would respond, “Well, the ‘Sabbath’ here must refer to the annual sabbaths as the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment is not a shadow but an eternal, moral law.” The person questioning usually has no desire even to look at the rest of the biblical evidence because he or she already believes the text cannot refer to the weekly Sabbath; if it does refer to the seventh day, it would blow their whole system of theology to pieces. In other words, they interpret a clear statement of Scripture according to their preconceived understanding. I call this mind-set “looking through the veil”.

Our conclusion after our thorough study of Colossians 2:16, 17 and many other Scriptures was that the Seventh-day Sabbath is a ritual law and not a moral law. Another key verse that led us to this conclusion was John 5:16-19:

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.” For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

The meaning of the Greek word translated “breaking” and the Greek tense—imperfect, indicating continuous action—used here makes it quite clear that Jesus really was continually breaking the Sabbath and continually calling God His own Father. However, when we say that Christ broke the Sabbath we usually receive this response, “Well, it cannot mean Jesus broke the Sabbath because the Sabbath is an eternal, moral law, and Jesus had to keep the law. If He broke the Sabbath He could never be our Savior, so I know this is not what this text means.” Again, there is not the slightest desire to study this text carefully because, based upon their theological paradigm, the Greek words and Greek tense could not mean what the Apostle John wrote.

One more illustration of the function of the law comes from several texts in Galatians:

- The Law came 430 years after Abraham (Gal. 3:17).
- The Law was added at the time of Moses (Gal. 3:19).
- The Law was to reign from Moses “until” Christ (Gal. 3:21-24).
- Now that Christ is come we are no longer under the law (Gal. 3:24, 25).

We believe the Law here refers to all the laws of the old covenant, not just the sacrificial laws. However, this idea is so foreign to those under the veil that they cannot accept what Paul states. Rather, as we have had dozens tell us, including one Adventist pastor, Paul misunderstood Christ, and one cannot accept what he teaches about the law. In other words, they would rather throw out Paul’s writings as a “source of truth” than to adjust their “truth” to his statements. They just “know” that this must mean the “ceremonial law” because the Ten Commandment law, they say, is God’s eternal moral law, given to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and it applies to all mankind and is the foundation of God’s government. Not a thought is given to the possibility that what Paul states could be truth that should be taken at face value.

They will answer, “Then you are saying that it is OK to kill, steal and commit adultery.” If we have received this comment once, we have received it a hundred times. From the many conversations we have had this summer, it appears many Adventists simply cannot separate old covenant laws from the eternal moral principles behind the laws. They see the Ten Commandments as a reflection of God’s righteousness and do not realize that the new covenant moral principles are so much higher than old covenant law, including the Ten Commandments, that Jesus could contrast old covenant

## **But the veil must be torn from top to bottom to open up the way into the Most Holy place where Christ has taken His seat and invites us to come in with confidence—not trusting our righteous law-keeping but the righteousness of God that comes through faith**

morality with the new, higher righteousness—the very righteousness of God which is the standard for new covenant morality.

### **Removing the veil**

With this introduction let us go back to our starting verse in 2 Corinthians and look closely at it, for in these verses Paul gives the secret of how the blinding veil is removed.

“But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:14-17).

First, let us be certain as to what Paul says. Note that “the reading of the old covenant” is parallel to “whenever Moses is read”. From this we can be certain that the old covenant is the Torah—the writings of Moses, including the Ten Commandments—which are the very words of the old covenant. The Sabbath, it is true, was the covenant sign for the children of Israel.

Next, we observe the veil is present when one reads the writings of Moses from the paradigm of the old covenant. However, when one turns to the Lord, that veil is taken away. When someone understands the simple, new covenant gospel which is faith in Christ without any reliance on works of any kind, that person is saved. The saving act is not faith plus keeping the commandments; it is not faith plus observing the Sabbath, nor is it faith plus anything else. Rather, it is trusting the righteousness that Christ worked out for guilty sinners on the cross by His shed blood (Rom. 3:21, 26; Gal. 2:21).

Note the result of this saving faith. Paul says that when the veil is removed, we live in a realm of “liberty”. This liberty gives us the freedom to serve God from a new motive and position of complete acceptance. Read this passage again:

“But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man

turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:14-17).

We are now born again by the Spirit of God. We are now God’s children and fully qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light (Col. 1:12-14). Now, for the first time, we can worship “in spirit and in truth”(Jn. 4:23). Now the love of Christ controls us, and we seek to obey ALL the moral principles found in ALL of Scripture. Furthermore, as we “walk by the Spirit”, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

It is my desire that every person who reads this would be able to experience what it means to live in this type of liberty with the veil removed. Often, the very thing that hinders us from removing the veil is that we want to hide behind it to protect our own presuppositions and theological house. But the veil must be torn from top to bottom to open up the way into the Most Holy place where Christ has taken His seat and invites us to come in with confidence—not trusting our righteous law-keeping but the righteousness of God that comes through faith (Rom. 3:21, 22).

The only way this transformation can happen is if we accept the authority of Scripture and take it for what it is—the active, living word of God. It is sharp enough to discern the thoughts and intentions of our hearts (Heb. 4:12).

As we submit our minds and hearts to the very word of God, Scripture will lead us to see the Living Word—Jesus Christ—as our covenant keeper Who is able to save to the uttermost. Then we will also recognize that Christ is the central truth of Scripture, the motive for true obedience.

### Sabbath in Colossians

Perhaps you are ready to look seriously at the reasons why so many hundreds, if not thousands, of former Adventists believe the Sabbath is a ritual law. Following is the biblical evidence I looked at that changed my mind from my Adventist understanding. Let us look at the Sabbath in Colossians 2:16 once more.

We believe the “Sabbaths” in Colossians 2:16 refer to the weekly Sabbaths because when the terms “festival, new moon, and Sabbath are used together in the Old Testament, they are found in either ascending or descending order:

1. Days, Months, Seasons (Sabbaths, New Moons, Fixed Festivals)

2. Seasons, Months, Days (Fixed Festivals, New Moons, Sabbaths)

2 Chron. 2:4: to offer burnt offerings morning and evening, on sabbaths and on new moons and on the appointed feasts of

the Lord our God, this being required forever in Israel.

1 Chron. 23:31: and to offer all burnt offerings to the Lord, on the sabbaths, the new moons and the fixed festivals in the number set by the ordinance concerning them, continually before the Lord.

2 Chron. 31:3: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths and for the new moons and for the fixed festivals, as it is written in the law of the Lord.

Hos. 2:11: I will also put an end to all her gaiety, Her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths And all her festal assemblies.

Eze. 45:17: It shall be the prince’s part to provide the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the drink offerings, at the feasts, on the new moons and on the sabbaths.

Col. 2:16, 17: Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

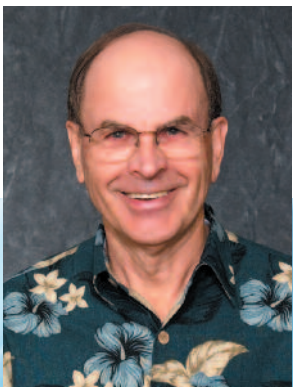
Notice the close parallel in wording and order in the references above. Here is evidence, not assumptions or hearsay, but good biblical evidence that the “Sabbaths” in Colossians 2:16, 17 are indeed the weekly Sabbaths. I recognize that accepting this conclusion shatters the worldview of many, as it did mine. If we accept the Sabbath as a ritual law, however, and not an eternal moral law, that conclusion harmonizes perfectly with the rest of the evidence of Scripture such as John 5 and Galatians 3. One does not have to throw out Paul as a source of truth. Neither does one have to dodge or explain away dozens of other texts which undermine Adventist theology. Rather, let the Sabbath be another ritual law pointing to Christ as the true Rest of God. Let Christ and Christ alone be *the only* testing truth as so clearly taught in Scripture.

### In summary

The Word of God—the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments—are the only source of religious truth. The Old Testament revealed God’s plan and promises, and the New Testament shows the fulfillment of those promises in the person of the Lord Jesus. Accepting Christ as our covenant keeper and our only righteousness removes the veil.

The Sabbath, then, not only points back to that first seventh day when man and God were in right relationship, but it also points forward to the “rest of God” that a person can receive the moment one places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that transforming act can happen in a moment of time—“today”.

He who believes has eternal life and does not come into judgment. †



**Dale Ratzlaff** is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., and owns LAM Publications, LLC. He served as an Adventist pastor for 13 years, seven at Monterey Bay Academy where he taught Bible. He and his wife Carolyn left the Adventist church in 1981 when he realized he could no longer teach the investigative judgment in clear conscience. He has authored *Sabbath in Christ, The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists, The Truth About Adventist “Truth”,* and *Truth Led Me Out.* These are available through his website, [LifeAssuranceMinistries.com](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.com).

**Thanks for integrity**

I just want to take a moment to tell you how impressed I am with the integrity of you and your publication. I am amazed every time I look through your magazine that you are so willing to be candid and open by publishing letters that are both in support of what you are doing and those that speak against your ministry. I believe it displays an openness that many ministries and organizations could learn from. While your detractors speak of what they perceive as mean-spirited attacks, it seems to me that you show the same love and concern for those who disagree with you that Christ did. Thank you for radically demonstrating God's love, compassion and truth to all who are open to receive it. You are a blessing.

PASTOR  
CRESTLINE, CA

**LAM kept me grounded**

Thank you for your ministry. I'm 63, saved since age 11, and I've had many struggles through disobedience to God's word.

Now I live close to Him and am secure in His love. I live in the mercies of Christ as a retired widow with income. Praise God. Nothing is secure, however, but Christ.

Without your ministry, I might have gotten caught up in the snare of Adventism. When perusing an online [Sabbath School] quarterly recently, I read the guilt trip put on Adventists for not being able to convince people like me to cross over. Thank God Life Assurance Ministries kept me grounded during my two years of research!

UPLAND, CA

**You will burn**

I would hate to be you at the Second Coming. You will burn.

NORTH BAY, CA

**Discarding negativity**

Having perused a few issues of *Proclamation!* I wonder if you shouldn't add #2 to your mission: Adventist Bashing.

I find no biblical command to criticize and condemn others, yet this is apparent throughout your magazine. Author bios and writings are apparently uniquely Ratzlaffic—i.e. they aren't so much about what the person has done and is doing for Christ, but rather about the fact that they once were Adventist.

Is the message of Jesus Christ not sufficient to fill your pages and your ministry? I don't read where the converted Paul Jew-bashed his former associates, but rather prayed for them and desired that they come to understand Jesus—crucified, risen, friend and Savior.

You folks must harbor serious grudges and resentments. Maybe I'm not well-read, but I don't know of another group of people claiming to know the "truth about Jesus Christ" who make a continual point in their publications to criticize and condemn another specific church group as you do.

church—while trying to convince people they are Christians!

I still remember how angry and hurt I became while reading, for the first time, an article against EGW; yet I was prompted to ask myself, "I wonder if there is any truth to this?" That was the beginning of my turning away from Adventism.

We pray for those who are having struggles, and we thank God that you are there for them!  
ELK GROVE, CA

**Life is rough—the devil is real**

For years I thought how much easier it would be not to be an Adventist. It was not easy being different. I tried in my own way to play down my Adventist roots, but they kept coming back to me. Memories such as singing, "Side by side we stand, awaiting God's command..." come to mind. Life is rough—the devil is real. I cannot discount the Adventist message. I cannot believe the Sabbath was changed; Christ would have said He was giving a new commandment before he rose into heaven. There is no way He

**I find the material you write in not only to be theologically inaccurate but the information in *Proclamation!* to contradict the spirit of Christ and the goals of Christianity completely. This, more than your theology, is what is completely repulsive to me.**

If you have the truth about Jesus, give it! If your message is overtly or covertly only that "Adventists are wrong," you haven't much of a redeeming message, do you?

You have, however, piqued my interest in Adventists! Having decided to discard negativity, I ask that you take my name off your mailing list.

POSITIVELY LIVING FOR JESUS  
MCMINNVILLE, TN

**Gaining new insights**

We praise the Lord for you and the work you are doing, praying daily for all of you and for Life Assurance Ministries. We look forward to every issue of *Proclamation!* and continue to gain new insights from God's word, even though we left the Adventist church 38 years ago and have attended churches where the real truth of the Bible is taught. Through your ministry we are blessed by the testimonies of others...

Some of the scathing letters you print are shocking, yet they graphically reveal the gross blindness because of the teachings of that

would leave without instructing the disciples regarding His "new commandment(s)". I cannot believe my six-year-old daughter went right to heaven; what kind of a God would take her from me—only to have her wondering why I am not there with her? I am far from perfect. I praise God that He loves me and is working on my heart. I am praying for everyone: my relatives who left when their California church left, my Walla Walla University acquaintances who have gone this way. Adventists are far from perfect—I am far from perfect. This is why I believe fully in the saving grace of Christ. Praise God, He loves me enough to have kept me in His hands. I praise God that He loves me enough to want "little old me" in His kingdom. Some people hate their Adventist roots—but I wonder...

"Meet me in heaven, we'll join hands together, meet me by the Savior's side, I'll meet you in heaven, we'll sing songs together, brothers and sisters, I'll be there."

VIA EMAIL

**Editor's response:** I am overwhelmed by the pain and grief you have endured, losing

**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 six-year-old daughter and having so many who are close to you move away from your spiritual base. I understand from experience how tightly we grip the reassuring foundation of our roots when we experience great loss.

I want to stand beside you and say, I agree: the Sabbath was never changed. You are absolutely right. Rather, it was fulfilled by the singular work of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 5:17). Now it is He, not a day, where we find rest. "Come to Me," He says, "all who are weary

eousness is imputed to us (2 Cor 5:21, Phil. 3:9). In Him we have eternal security, and we can rejoice in everything, because He "causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

**In my prayers**

Life Assurance Ministries is in my prayers. Your ministry is much needed, and it was there for me. God bless.  
 ESPARTO, CA

**You helped me make the final psychological/spiritual leap I needed to make to finally exit the Adventist church. I knew that you understood my conflicts and my thinking, and all your reading materials were such a tremendous help to me.**

and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The writer of Hebrews says, "[God] again fixes a certain day, 'Today,' saying through David... 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...' So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from His" (Heb. 4:7-10).

Moreover, Jesus did give us a new commandment before He went to heaven. In fact, shortly before He went to the cross he articulated it: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). God had always commanded His people to love their neighbors, but the new requirement was loving as Jesus loved. In other words, Jesus' new commandment was that we love sacrificially to the point of giving our lives for the sake of the salvation of another if necessary. This command is impossible for us—unless we are born of the Spirit (John 3:3-5) and are filled with the literal presence of God.

Finally, when God receives the spirit of a child into His presence, that child would never be sad or fearful. Romans 8:38-39 explains that nothing, not even death, can separate God's people from the love of Christ. In Christ is the safest, most secure and hopeful place in all of reality. Paul said to depart and be with the Lord is "very much better" than remaining in the flesh (Phil 1:23).

Jesus is all we need. In Him we have forgiveness, and we are counted as completely righteous because His own personal right-

**Speaking truth**

Keep up the good work. Continue your faith in speaking the truth; I'm praying for all of you.  
 MOUNTAIN HOME, AR

**Ellen White false prophet**

Please still send *Proclamation!*. I grew up in the church and schools of Seventh-day Adventists. I believe Sister White is a false prophet, and I don't like to hear her preached. I no longer go to the Adventist church.  
 MERLIN, OR

**Anger and hurt**

I am a 20 year old Christian college student about to start my senior year as a psychology major. I also live in Lincoln, NE where you held a weekend seminar concerning the Adventist church a few weeks ago. I find the material you write not only to be theologically inaccurate, but the information in *Proclamation!* to contradict the spirit of Christ and the goals of Christianity completely. This, more than your theology, is what is completely repulsive to me. Everything I have found in the *Proclamation!* magazines that I have read as well as what I find online about your group has been completely negative and all about what you consider to be "faults" in Adventism....

As a psychology major, I can tell you that anyone who knows anything about the human mind can spot anger and hurt a mile away, and that is all that I find from your presentations and your magazine. Your attacks on a fellow Christian church [do] nothing to reflect Christ, or His new covenant that you so intently claim to "defend". I have found, to

my extreme disappointment, your group to reflect Satan and his wishes, not those of our Father in Heaven. Anyone who has experienced or has even witnessed TRUE worship will tell you that it is incredibly attractive, incredibly addictive, and brings you to a place where criticism isn't something you can dwell on—even if you try. You can't be hateful while worshipping Our Christ...If you were truly "dwelling in Him" you would not be able to have a captive audience (like the people who attend your seminars or read your *Proclamation!* magazine) without completely focussing on Christ, His word, His love, and his unbelievable acceptance. I find none of this presented to the audiences you have. That shows me that your true intent isn't to dwell in Christ.

My heart hurts for all of you, you are all in my prayers because His love is bigger than your anger, hurt, negativity, criticism and hateful spirit. I will pray that the anger and hurt that your writings and seminars display so blatantly will be healed. I pray that you will find the real Christ, fall in love with who He really is and lose sight of this anger and rage that you hold in your heart. There is no room for any of that in Christ's presence.

VIA EMAIL

**Psychological and spiritual leap**

I should tell you that Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* were a huge blessing to me when I found you in late 2006. You helped me make the final psychological/spiritual leap I needed to make to finally exit the Adventist church. I knew that you understood my conflicts and my thinking, and all your reading materials were such a tremendous help to me.

Since then I have become a much more diligent student of God's word. I find I can't get enough and really hunger for it. In the summer of 2008 I was re-baptized when I realized I had no idea what I was doing when my Adventist pastor baptized me at age eight. I now realize what it means to come to repentance, place my trust in Jesus, and live as a follower of my Lord and Savior. What a difference!

Praise God for his amazing patience with me. I pray for you and the work you are doing. Your work makes a difference and changes lives. May God continue to bless you.

SAN CLEMENTE, CA

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

# 5TH ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

**YES, I WANT TO REGISTER** for the Former Adventist Fellowship weekend at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, February 12–14, 2010. Does not include transportation or lodging.

Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ X \$65 (each person) = Total amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetarian?  YES (number) \_\_\_\_\_  NO (number) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return with check or money order in included envelope (space limited to 150).**

NAME #1 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #2 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #3 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #4 \_\_\_\_\_

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## DEFENDING THE FAITH

FEBRUARY 12–14, 2010

TRINITY CHURCH

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



### PRESENTERS

- **Dale Ratzlaff** FOUNDER, LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES
- **Greg Taylor** SENIOR PASTOR, HEMPFIELD BROTHERS IN CHRIST CHURCH
- **Gary Inrig** SENIOR PASTOR, TRINITY CHURCH, REDLANDS
- **John Rittenhouse** ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, BIOLA UNIVERSITY
- **Carolyn Macomber** LEADER, FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP, ST JOSEPH, MICHIGAN, RECENTLY FIRED FROM ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
- **Steve Pitcher** RESEARCHER/WRITER, LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES
- **Martin Carey** SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND ASTRONOMER
- **Richard Tinker** PRESIDENT, LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES
- **Colleen Tinker** EDITOR, *PROCLAMATION!* MAGAZINE
- **Sharon Strum's praise team** TRINITY CHURCH, REDLANDS
- **More exciting presenters! See updates on website.**

### FEATURES

- Christianity EDU: Biblically based classes
- Breakout sessions addressing issues former Adventists face
- Food and fellowship time, and sales area
- Communion, prayer, and testimonies Saturday evening
- Sunday lunch with the afternoon open for fellowship

### ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE TIMES

- Begins Friday, February 12, 2009 at 6:00 pm
- Ends Sunday, February 14, 2009 at 4:00 pm

### TO REGISTER (SPACE LIMITED TO THE FIRST 150)

- \$65 per person, must register before February 1, 2010
- Sign up online or use coupon above.
- Fee includes meetings, handouts, three meals on Saturday, lunch on Sunday, and snacks. Scholarships are available!
- You must make your own lodging/transportation arrangements.
- A limited number of local church member's homes are available for those with financial challenges. Call for more information.

### TO SIGN-UP ONLINE

Go to [www.FormerAdventist.com](http://www.FormerAdventist.com) and follow the links.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: Phone toll free (877)-349-6984**

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

## The life A F T E R with Chris Lee

“**O**rganized Religion.” The term has a negative ring to it, doesn’t it? I’ve talked to many people who are turned off by anything with defined leadership structure and corporate worship. Who needs all that stuff anyway? I think there is a pretty decent New Testament case for saying, “We do!” Now, I know that idea probably doesn’t go over well if you’re a John-Wayne-rugged-individualist or a James-Dean-loner-outsider. After leaving Adventism, that’s a pretty natural reaction, but is it a biblical reaction?

This isn’t the kind of column where I’m going to give you a bunch of texts to look up. I’m just going to suggest some things you might think about and then check out on your own to see what really lines up with Scripture—you know, kind of like the Bereans did in the book of Acts. Speaking of Acts, that book gives us some idea of what Jesus intended for His church. Jesus trained the apostles to be leaders in His church. They in turn appointed deacons to administer day-to-day needs and left leaders in each new church they founded. It was, dare I say, “Organized”. Not only was there organization in leadership, but also in worship. Contrary to what the “home-church” crowd says, the very earliest church did not meet exclusively in small informal groups in homes. In Acts 6 we see that so many Jews and Gentiles had come into the church that organizational problems arose. This situation shows that the early church functioned as a corporate unit with designated leaders, teachers and deacons. The pattern that emerges is of a Church with organized leadership, corporate worship, and small group fellowship.

The structure that was so important for the early Christians coming from



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Judaism is equally valuable to those of us coming out of Adventism. Walking into a “non-Adventist” church was perhaps the scariest thing I’ve ever done, but it was also one of the most healing things I’ve ever experienced. A healthy, well-balanced church provides an environment for us to learn and grow. A healthy church is characterized by leaders who are committed to seeing their flock grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and life in the Spirit, the perfect prescription for recovering legalists.

In addition, authentic Christian relationships are powerful tools God uses to mold us. He created the Church as the environment where these relationships are lived out. Fellowship with Christians never tainted by Adventist beliefs has helped me reorient, deprogram, and recover. I’ve been exposed to fresh ideas, solid teaching, and a new outlook on what it means to be a Christ-follower. I’ve experienced what it means to do life together with imperfect people who are willing to admit their weaknesses. It is amazing how God will use others to edify and encourage us while rubbing off our rough edges. It’s something like one of those rock polishing machines where the ugly rocks bounce around together until they come out shining, smooth, and beautiful.

If you are not yet plugged into a local body of believers, I encourage you to start checking some out. If you’re anything like me, you’ll be a bit overwhelmed by the many options and the differences in non-essential secondary beliefs. That’s okay. Unity in the essentials, mostly surrounding the person and work of Jesus, is what binds us all together in Christian fellowship. I encourage you to begin to explore the fullness of life in Christ’s body that God wants for you. It’s time to experience the adventure of the “life after”. †



**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. He leads a Life Group Bible study for former Adventists at Lincoln Berean.