

Summer "Tour of Encouragement" – UPDATE AND SCHEDULE

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

MAY/JUNE 2009
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 3



Opening Orion

I stand on a solid foundation | I AM NOT A SPIRITUAL ISRAELITE

MYSTERY | Does Paul conflict with Jesus? | WORDS OF HOPE



COLLEEN TINKER

Retraining my **Adventist** mind

As a child (OK—as an adult also) I often stared at the belt of Orion and imagined that Jesus would descend from that central point of light surrounded by a cloud of bright angels. He would collect those who would be saved, and they would return to heaven through that same opening.

Sometimes when I feared Jesus might be returning but I wasn't ready to meet him, I would comfort myself that He couldn't come yet; there had been no time of trouble when the international death decree would give Sunday-keepers permission to kill us Sabbath-keepers as we fled to the hills.

Other times I would see moonlight shining through a break in the Oregon clouds, and I would fear it was Jesus coming—

but I knew it couldn't be because there had not been a small dark cloud the size of a man's hand in the east that grew bigger as it resolved into Jesus coming with His angels.

I firmly believed I as an Adventist was part of "spiritual Israel". As the remnant church, we had replaced Israel as God's chosen people, but like Israel, we struggled with unbelief. God was waiting for us to obey Him perfectly; He couldn't bless us if we rebelled against Him by breaking His Sabbath with secular conversations, tasting pork, or fraternizing with the "Philistines" outside our ranks. Moreover, our collective disobedience of God's commands was preventing Jesus from returning. He wouldn't reward us with heaven until we perfectly reflected His character. If I was not faithful—if I had even one unconfessed sin—Jesus would not be able to place my sins on Satan the scapegoat who would carry them into the cleansing fire of hell where he would be punished for them.

I believed every one of these things was either in the Bible or directly revealed by God.

I felt quite at home in the books of Exodus and Leviticus, and I found some comfort in Psalms. The epistles, however, confused me, and Hebrews was downright dull. I knew Paul was the apostle to the gentiles, but I understood "gentiles" to mean the non-Jews alive in the first century. As part of spiritual Israel, I believed we had a more complete revelation of truth than those early Christians had. It never occurred to me that Paul was God's apostle

to me, a modern gentile. Of course, Paul was part of the Bible, but after all, even Peter said he was hard to understand!

This confusion was the reason we needed our special messenger who illuminated Scripture for us, making plain the hidden meanings in the ancient texts. How fortunate we were, I thought, that God had given His spiritual Israelites an inspired commentary in the person and work of Ellen White!

Years later when I finally heard and embraced the gospel of God, I entered a long process of rooting out the non-biblical ideas that shaped my worldview. I felt loss when I let go of the romantic notion that Jesus would descend from a passageway in Orion. It was embarrassing to realize that the Bible did not say Jesus would return in a cloud that started out small, dark, and the size of a man's hand.

Moreover, it was deeply shocking to me to finally realize that the scapegoat in Leviticus 16 represented Jesus, not Satan. I was horrified at my early teaching.

Shedding an Ellen White-shaped worldview and adopting biblical reality took time, but confidence and trust have been the result of living in truth. I lost my cut-and-dried picture of the future, but I have gained a relationship with a God who is so big I cannot understand Him. He is so powerful and patient that I can completely rest in Him. He is in charge of His own plans; I cannot change His mind. Rather, He changes me.

In this issue Martin Carey explores the Adventist tradition of Orion's opening. Autumn McMinimy tells how she discovered that she is a gentile, not an Adventist Israelite, and Dale Ratzlaff discusses the frequent claim that Paul and Jesus disagree. Esther Aust shares her faith story, and Carolyn Macomber has written a poem describing her experience of being born again. Joan Yorba-Gray tells how words of Scripture comforted her during a crisis of health in her long walk with HIV.

We pray that as you read, you will meet the powerful Jesus who is sovereign over all reality and who reveals all truth. He is enough! †

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Open letter to Ken Campbell

In a recent letter which is too long for printing in our Letters to the Editor section, Mr. Campbell stated, “If anyone who truly cares about truth reads the March/April 2009 *Proclamation!* they will have solid proof that the Ratzlaff cult teaches falsehood that goes even beyond that espoused by other better known and more popular cults.

“For example, Dale Ratzlaff quotes 1 Corinthians 15:1–4 then writes, ‘Note what is NOT mentioned in this clear gospel statement. There is no mention of law or obedience. The only

thing for us to do is to believe—express belief and trust—in the gospel of Christ.’

“Well, in keeping with his [Ratzlaff’s] ‘pick and choose’ false ‘theology’, Jesus Christ Himself did not preach the true gospel!”

Then Mr. Campbell lists a number of verses to show that obedience is taught and quotes John 14:15, “If you love me, keep my commandments”.

Here is my response:

DALE RATZLAFF

Dear Ken Campbell,

I want to thank you for your letter. It is often the case that I may not clearly communicate what I believe. I try, but for one reason or another sometimes I don’t do it as well as I wish. So I thank you for the opportunity to get a second chance to write about the gospel.

We believe in obedience. In fact, we believe that the obedience which follows the new birth is a higher obedience than obedience to the law and includes all the moral principles taught in Scripture. Please note that the referenced article was intended to be an exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 15:1–4 in which Paul clearly describes the gospel. And yes, you will see that in this section of Scripture Paul does not mention either obedience or law. He also says that this gospel is a saving gospel.

Lest some misunderstand, it is our settled conviction that the gospel refers to Christ’s work of grace for us. We are saved by God’s grace alone without any law-keeping or obedience on our part. Salvation is 100% the work of Christ. Once we are saved and born again, the Holy Spirit will work out that free salvation in our lives. This fruit in our lives develops after we are saved because it is at that point we receive the Holy Spirit and are thereby sealed.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

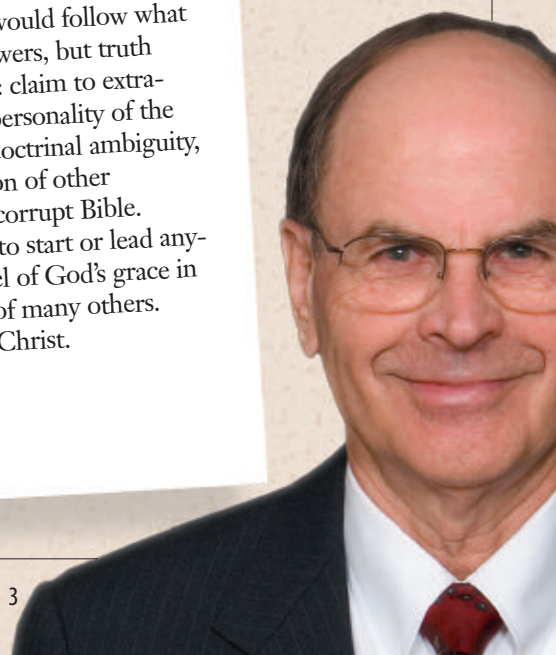
I discovered that in the Gospel of John, the word “commandment” in Greek never refers to the Ten Commandments but to the new covenant law of love and specific commands from the Father to Christ. When referring to the old covenant, John always uses the the Greek word for “law”. You may want to check these findings for yourself.

You mention the “Ratzlaff cult”. It is not our desire or intent that people would follow what we teach unless it measures up to the word of God. We are not seeking followers, but truth seekers. It is my understanding that the marks of a cult include the following: claim to extra-biblical revelation, denial of the Trinity, defective Christology, denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit, defective soteriology, exclusive salvation, persecution complex, doctrinal ambiguity, presumptuous leadership, segmented interpretation of the Bible, denunciation of other Christians, limited eschatology, messianic complex, gospel confusion, and a corrupt Bible.

Thanks again for this opportunity to communicate. I surely do not want to start or lead anything akin to a cult. Rather, my life goal is to communicate the simple gospel of God’s grace in Christ. The gospel has changed my life, and I have seen it change the lives of many others.

May God bless us each as we seek to follow our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In His joy,
Dale Ratzlaff

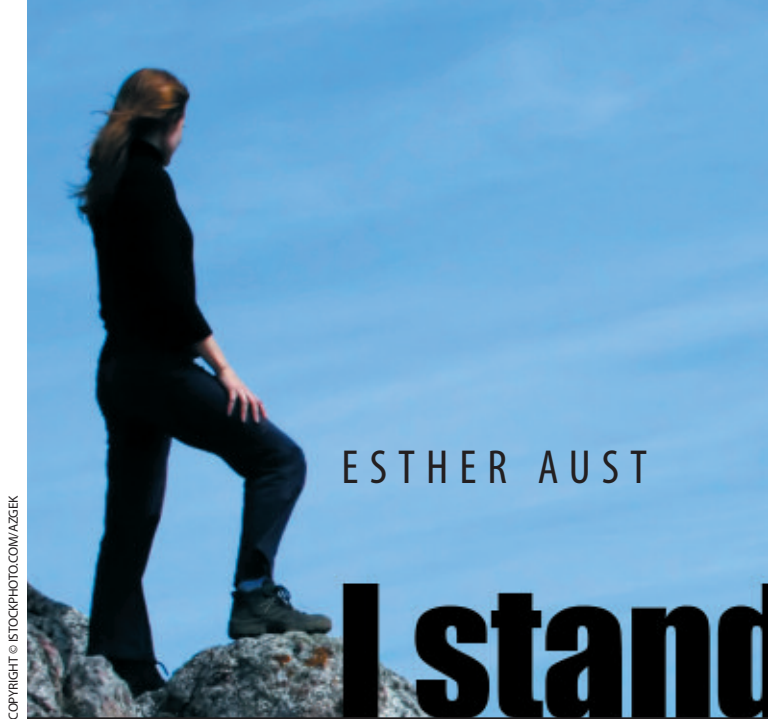


For as long as I can remember, Romans 8:31-39 has been one of my favorite passages of Scripture. Each Bible I have ever owned has found these lines highlighted:

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “*For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord.”

While that passage has always pulled on my heart, I can’t honestly say that I understood it until about five years ago. My being raised in the Midwest in a good and sincere Adventist home meant that my parents raised me to seek after God and to desire to serve Him. Our home was filled with the Bible and Ellen White’s writings; we rarely missed Sabbath School or church, and my parents sacrificed greatly so that my brother and I could attend Adventist schools. Between my Adventist heritage and my own immersion in it, I felt I really knew what it meant to be a Christ-follower. I sometimes found myself looking around and wondering why, among all the dedicated and seemingly honest Christians in the world who never seemed to be able to grasp the “full truth”, I lucked out by being born into the “true church”. Being raised in Adventism and educated in its schools meant that I had a firm foundation in its doctrines. I knew the proof texts and could answer any questions about my beliefs. I was very proud of my good fortune and knowledge.

Shortly after my husband and I married, we settled into an “Adventist Mecca” community and joined an active and surprisingly dynamic church. Life couldn’t have been sweeter or more stable. Yet something was missing. I longed for a deeper relationship with God and earnestly sought out the next spiritual high. Those mountain top experiences were precipitated by a fabulous sermon from Dwight Nelson (senior pastor of the Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University), a phenomenal evangelistic series, a good book, a relevant small group; things that inspired me to “do better” at maintaining my link with Christ. At the same time, we started to see the dynamics of the “remnant church” in the community. In stark contrast to the hard working, dedicated people we knew, horribly unchristian business practices, pride, greed, and perfectionism ran rampant. We understood, however, that the devil was working extra hard among the righteous, so we carried on with our life and involvement. If you’d told me then that I’d be writing this story today—I’d have scoffed.



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ESTHER AUST

I stand

Astonishment

In the spring of 2004 I stumbled across a website about Ellen White, and I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. All my life I’d been conditioned to believe that as an Adventist I was supposed to be different from the rest of Christianity, and I was hedged against the belief that Adventism was a cult; of course people who didn’t understand would view us that way. That evening Stephen and I spent the night with our entire library of Ellen White books looking at the quotes from the sources and in context. Within a matter of days I had ample evidence that she contradicted both herself and the Bible regularly. We boxed up her books. With our entire foundation of belief crumbling, we set out to shore up Adventism using the Bible alone. Through the days that followed, more and more gaping holes appeared in Adventist theology. It soon became apparent that we had more questions than answers, so we began looking for help. During the days I read Adventist publications and dialogued with Adventist ministers and theologians; during the nights we read the Scriptures. It was becoming more and more apparent that what we were finding in the pages of the Word was not jiving with what I was getting from denominational sources.

We read in Galatians that clinging to the law was to belong to the old covenant which originated at Sinai and was allegorically equated to being a bond servant rather than a child of promise (Gal. 4). We learned that to focus on the 10 Commandments or on any of the Mosaic law meant a veil was over our hearts and we were separated from Christ (2 Cor. 3). We discovered that along with all the other types and shadows that Christ fulfilled, He also is our Sabbath rest; as He is a better Covenant and Priest, so is He a better Sabbath (Heb. 4). We grasped that we had spirits that were made alive in Christ (Jn. 5:24-25; 2 Cor. 5). We learned that Christ had been at the right hand of the Father since His ascension into Heaven (Acts 7; Eph. 1; 1 Pet. 3; Heb. 6:19,20). We marveled that atonement for sin was completed on the cross (Heb. 9). We were amazed that dietary restrictions and tithing laws were completely different under the new covenant.

on a solid foundation

We learned that Ellen White said the exact words God predicted a false prophet would say (Col. 2). The haziness of our past confusion and lack of understanding of Paul's writings yielded to an organized, repetitive petition for the Gospel. As we wrestled with each successive question, almost immediately God provided the increasingly clear answers. The Scriptures became alive with new, concise meanings. The unsurpassed glory and fulfillment of Jesus Christ that was emerging left me speechless and tearful. The realization that from the moment Adam disobeyed the command of God and died the spiritual death that resulted in death for every human descendent down through time astounded me with the weight of my human inheritance. But in the very same moment, for the very first time I truly saw the words of Christ in John 3 though I'd known them by heart my entire life: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 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."

We humbly knelt before God and renounced our spiritual pride and accepted Christ alone as our Savior.

The glory of the gospel is that it is not about me or about my ability to live a godly life. It is not even to validate that God is just or to prove that Christ came to enable and show us how to live. The gospel message is all about Him and His work. I was dead, but God in Jesus paid the price for sin and died my death. Further, He rose from the grave, forever conquering death. He called me to Himself, and through belief

that He is who He says He is and has done what He promised, I'm given salvation and declared righteous. When I believe, Christ makes me to die with Him and, at the same time, to live with Him. Death no longer has any power over me because of Him, and regardless of when this body turns to dust, I will forever be with my Creator. As Abram slept while God made the covenant with Himself, so I, too, rest in the finished work and provision of that covenant. And now, though I'm far from perfect and am human like everyone else, I no longer search for the mountaintop experiences as I did before. Through God's grace, being born of the spirit means that I get to walk continually with God as Adam did in Eden. His Spirit is in me, and He continually directs my life.

Now, as I reread Romans 8, I am filled with the assurance that my sins were dealt with 2,000 years ago by the Sacrifice who bore them to the cross and by the Scapegoat who carried them outside the camp. No present or future economic hardship or disintegrating culture will separate me from my Savior. No success or failure restricts God's acceptance of me. Nothing I do or don't do, eat or don't eat can impact my salvation. No human or devil can pry me out of the hand of God. On this faith and solid foundation I stand, and with the assertion of Paul I say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed, from faith to faith; as it is written, *but the righteous man shall live by faith*" (Rom. 1:16). †

Esther Aust, her husband Stephen, and their two year old son Mackston, currently reside in the beautiful beach and wine country of Southwest Michigan. Together, they run a small home based construction company. Esther, a graduate of Andrews University, is an independent childbirth educator and provides labor and newborn support. One of her favorite pastimes is studying and discussing theology and the doctrines of grace.



Opening Orion



PHOTO BY SHARON CAREY

MARTIN L. CAREY

Martin Carey grew up as an Adventist in many different places, including Washington D.C., Missouri, and Guam, USA. During daylight hours he works as a psychologist for a high school in San Bernardino, California. He is also a licensed family therapist. He is married to Sharon, and has two sons, Matthew, 7, and Nick, 21. He continues to search for clear, dark skies with seven different telescopes up to 20 inches. The study of intelligent design takes up his remaining energy. You may contact him at martin-carey@sbcglobal.net.



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“Can you show us the open space in Orion?”

The earnest question came from a young couple approaching the telescope in the dark. It was a crisp February night in the southwest desert where the sky looked black and the stars twinkled fiercely. Rigel and Betelgeuse, the stars at Orion’s corners, shone brilliant white and orange. I swung the 20 inch telescope southward and centered on the giant’s sword. Beautiful things are best when shared, and the Nebula of Orion is among the finest spectacles of nature.

The Great Nebula, also known as M42, appears to the naked eye as only a star, but the poet Tennyson captures its mysterious nature:

...A single misty star, Which is the second in a line of stars,
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three, I never gazed
upon it but I dreamt, Of some vast charm concluded in that
star...¹

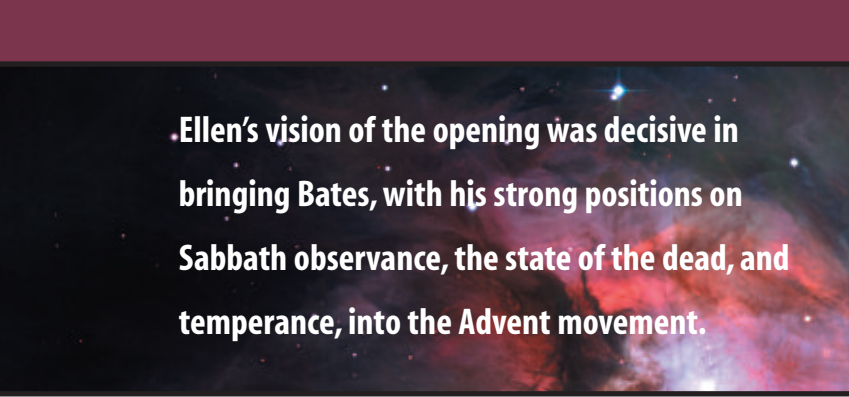
Through a telescope one can see a cloudy mass that glows pastel green, sprinkled with tiny stars. A bright little square of stars, the Trapezium, shines at the center of the cloud. M42 is very popular among stargazers, and those who see it the first time often gasp with delight. Its enchanting beauty has inspired writers like G.P. Serviss to describe,

...stars apparently completed, shining like gems just
dropped from the hand of the polisher, and around them are
masses, eddies, currents and swirls of nebulous matter yet to
be condensed...²

During my 40 years as an amateur astronomer, I have been impressed with the fascination Adventists have for Orion. The “opening” in Orion is an Adventist tradition that began in the earliest days of the movement and has become a symbol of Adventists’ longings. No matter what science finds within the nebula, Adventists cherish a belief that Jesus will return through it. This belief shapes not only their eschatology but also impacts their unique identity. We will explore the origin of this belief and seek to understand why it persists.

Joseph Bates’ Quest

Joseph Bates was an avid student of the stars, and as a retired sea captain had gazed at them from many remote places in the world. He was convicted in 1839 by the preaching of William Miller predicting Christ’s coming and was among those disappointed in both 1843 and 1844 when Christ did not return. Trying to make sense out of Miller’s failed prophecies, Bates searched for evidence that Christ’s return was to be a literal appearance instead of a “spiritualized” one, as some taught.³ In May of 1846 he finished his tract called *The Opening Heavens*. Here he reasoned that the biblical references to heaven being opened (i.e. John 1:51 and Rev. 19:11) and to the New Jerusalem descending were refer-



Ellen's vision of the opening was decisive in bringing Bates, with his strong positions on Sabbath observance, the state of the dead, and temperance, into the Advent movement.

ring to events that would occur in one location in the sky, the middle star of Orion's sword.

From what part of Heaven will this glorious *City* appear?
We answer, from where the flaming sword is "guarding the way of the tree of life..."⁴

Building his arguments, Bates quoted astronomer Christiaan Huygens, who in 1656 had described the "opening in the sky through which a brighter region was visible." For Bates, the region beyond must be the "heaven of heavens" streaming forth God's glory. Bates had read astronomer James Ferguson's descriptions of "cloudy stars" and how the "most remarkable of all the cloudy stars" is in Orion's sword, containing an opening into deeper space.⁵ He was convinced Huygens' "opening" was the gateway to heaven.

In November of 1846, five months after publishing his tract, Bates was invited to a conference with the newly married Ellen and James White in Topsham, Maine. Bates knew of Ellen's visions but questioned their authenticity. At this conference, he watched Ellen White in vision traveling to other planets and beyond. She described a "gap in the sky" of great beauty, framed by four stars appearing like gates, with bright glory shining through. Bates became very excited and exclaimed, "She is giving a more wonderful description than any astronomer ever dreamed of."⁶

Because White had not demonstrated any knowledge of astronomy, Bates never suspected that the Whites might have read his tract. Hearing Ellen's glorious description of the gap, Bates was convinced that her visions were from God. He was so impressed, in fact, that he wished Lord Rosse, builder of the world's then-largest telescope, had been there to hear her. Bates believed that Rosse had seen the "gap" with his giant telescope, and he was certain that White's description would have deeply impressed him.⁷ Ellen's vision of the opening was decisive in bringing Bates, with his strong positions on Sabbath observance, the state of the dead, and temperance, into the Advent movement. The opening in Orion, therefore, had a role not only in shaping Adventist eschatology but also, even more profoundly, in gathering together its founders and fundamental beliefs.

A History of Openings

In 1321, Dante completed his sublime poem, *The Divine Comedy*, with vivid depictions of Purgatory, Heaven, and Inferno. Dante drew from classical sources such as Ptolemy and portrayed an elegant cosmology of celestial spheres. Earth lay at the center of the cosmos, while the planets and stars occupied the inner and middle spheres. The outermost sphere was called the Empyrean, the fiery realm of light, of heavenly beings, and of God.⁸

The Empyrean often appeared in other classics. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, God orders Adam and Eve to
...multiply a Race of Worshippers holy and just: thrice
happie if they know their happiness, and persevere upright.
So sung they, and the Empyrean rung, with Halleluiahs: Thus
was Sabbath kept.⁹

Thomas Aquinas and many church fathers taught that the Empyrean was the highest Heaven from which God's glory emanates. In their minds, God's universe was an ordered place of simple geometric forms where everything had its exact place, including God Himself. The spheres remained the dominant model for centuries until the models began to expand. Although today our universe doesn't resemble Dante's, we still find an echo of it when we sing, "all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres."

In 1656, Christiaan Huygens, mathematician extraordinaire, observed the nebula of Orion and was intrigued with its luminous cloud. He perceived the appearance "of an opening in the sky through which a brighter region was visible."¹⁰ Huygens suspected he might have found a passage to deep space. For centuries, this single statement by Huygens influenced many astronomers' perceptions of Orion.

Natural philosopher and clergyman William Derham lived decades after Huygens and had a passion for science. He found more than one good use for a telescope. He was the first to accurately measure the speed of sound by observing the firing of cannon shots miles away and timing the arrival of the sound by the church clock. As an astronomer Derham had read of Huygens' "gap," and held that the "nebulous stars" were extremely distant objects beyond the "fixed stars." Nebulae are "Charms...openings into an immense Region of Light," Derham said in 1733.¹¹ Religion and magic combined in this object.

The magic motif also appeared in the work of 19th century poet Alfred Tennyson. He has the sorcerer Merlin speak of a "charm" in the "single misty star:"

I never gazed upon it but I dreamt of some vast charm
concluded in that star to make fame nothing.¹²

The notion of openings in the heavens returned one summer night in 1785 when William Herschel with his telescope discovered a dark patch among the stars by Scorpius. Dense star clouds surround this dark nebula, and the effect is striking. He exclaimed to Caroline, his sister, "Surely this is a hole in the heavens!"¹³ He was primed to perceive an "opening" that night; he had read Ferguson's mention of Orion's "gap", and he was acquainted with Huygens' opening.¹⁴ Moreover, he had compiled his own list of celestial "tubes". Herschel's interpretation of celestial "openings", however, was inverted from the interpretations of his predecessors. Instead of openings appearing brighter, Herschel believed that the open spaces appeared as darker regions among the stars.¹⁵ Joseph Bates would also follow this reversal of Huygen's perception.

Although he was devoutly Christian, Herschel was a man of science and did not look for charms or the Third Heaven, as Derham did. No bright empyrean had been sought or found. Europe's greatest astronomer, however, suspected that

our Milky Way was not the limit. He believed that we live in a cosmos much grander than that of Dante.

Through Mirrors, Dimly

William Parsons of Ireland, the Third Earl of Rosse, had been building ever-larger telescopes to resolve the mysteries of the heavens. Lord Rosse had not only substantial means and manpower; he was a stellar engineer. Soon after completing an instrument with a 3 foot diameter mirror he started the construction of the “Leviathan of Parsonstown,” the world’s greatest telescope. So, in 1843, he and his servants began casting a three ton, 6 foot speculum metal mirror and a tube longer than a school bus to hold it.¹⁶

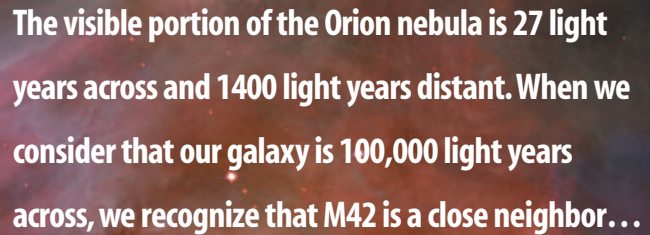
After many setbacks and a lengthy delay because of the Irish Potato Famine, Rosse finally had his 54 foot tall monster telescope ready for “first light”, March 5th of 1845. It was easily the largest telescope in the world and would remain so for 72 years. He invited two astronomer friends from England, Sir James South and Dr. Thomas Robinson, to his castle for the telescope’s “first light.” According to records, Orion was a priority on their agenda. But when the wretched Irish weather finally cleared, Orion was out of the telescope’s limited range, so they contented themselves with other nebulae.¹⁷

A detailed report of the telescope and its inaugural March 5th observing session appeared in the *Times of London* on April 16th, 1845, and in the *Illustrated London Times* three days later. In spite of his original intention, Rosse had not yet observed Orion; *The Times* report only states Rosse’s desire to observe the nebula in the future. In fact, he was unable to view Orion until December of that year.¹⁸ Adventist writer J.N. Loughborough later claimed, however, that Lord Rosse had observed an Orion opening in early 1845.¹⁹

When Rosse did finally observe Orion, he wanted to settle a matter. Orion’s nebula was the focus of an intense debate at that time, but it was not about openings. French mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace, an avowed atheist, had published his nebular theory some years before. He proposed that stars and planets were formed by natural means from clouds of luminous fluid. When Napoleon had asked Laplace how God fit in, Laplace replied, “I had no need of that hypothesis.”²⁰ Although not atheists, the Herschels had also been favorable to the “luminous fluid” theory, while Rosse was opposed. Rosse believed that all the stars had already been created, that there were no clouds of luminous fluid but only completed stars.²¹

The unanswered question Rosse wanted to settle was this: was M42 a cloud of glowing fluid in near proximity, or was it an enormous star cloud too distant to resolve into individual stars? Lord Rosse and his friends had resolved many other nebulae into stars. If M42 could also be resolved, then the atheistic nebular hypothesis was refuted. Perhaps the Leviathan of Parsonstown could show proof of creation and settle the question.²²

Finally, in March of 1846, Rosse saw additional stars in M42 and was certain that with a larger telescope, all its clouds



The visible portion of the Orion nebula is 27 light years across and 1400 light years distant. When we consider that our galaxy is 100,000 light years across, we recognize that M42 is a close neighbor...

would resolve into stars. Others “confirmed” this finding, and most accepted the doctrine that all nebulae were actually star systems.²³ Moreover, Lord Rosse had defended the Creator’s reputation.

Rosse’s doctrine was swept away in 1864, however, when Huggins turned his spectroscope on M42 and found that its light revealed burning gas.²⁴ With Leviathan, nevertheless, Rosse had made a monumental contribution. One of those cloudy objects he studied revealed a spiral shape, and Rosse recorded its graceful curves on paper. He had revealed beautiful M51, the “Whirlpool” galaxy.²⁵ He couldn’t know that it actually contains 100 billion stars, is 30 million light years away, and that there are 200 billion of these spirals out there. He had assumed that our single Milky Way spiral contained the entire universe.

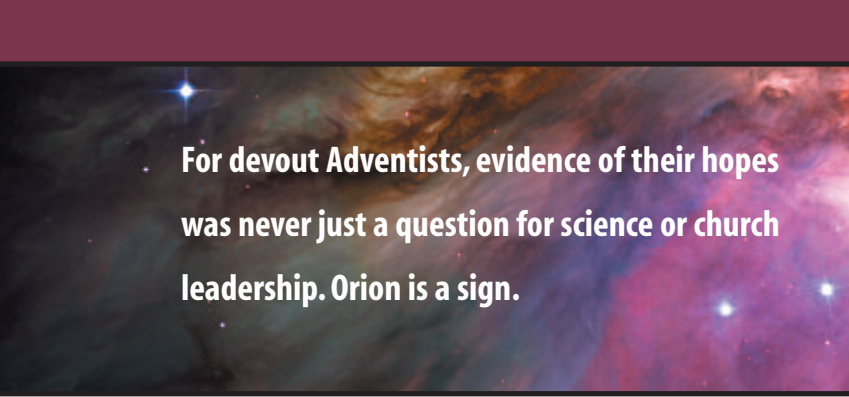
As for Herschel’s dark “tubes” into deeper space, E.E. Barnard later showed that those dark patches in the heavens are clouds of gas and dust which block the light of the stars behind them. Herschel’s “hole in the heavens” near Scorpius is a “Barnard object.”²⁶

Rosse’s theories had come to naught. He had been uncertain about openings in M42, and he was mistaken about its composition. With his drawing of a spiral galaxy, however, he gave the world a glimpse into the unknowable vastness of the cosmos. Best of all, the Creator whom Rosse had been trying to defend had carried out His own purposes. A rivalry, an atheist’s theory, and an ink drawing all worked together to reveal the depth of the Creator’s universe and to demonstrate that He remains in charge of His own reputation.

M42 and New Discoveries

The visible portion of the Orion nebula is 27 light years across and 1400 light years distant. When we consider that our galaxy is 100,000 light years across, we recognize that M42 is a close neighbor and is certainly not the center of the universe. It does, however, keep yielding more secrets. When NASA turned the Hubble telescope on M42 in 1991, we beheld new wonders called “proplyds,” or proto-planetary systems. Scattered about the nebula like ripening fruit, these condensing blobs of gas display odd shapes, and some have stars glowing inside. Astronomers believe that these are solar systems in formation.²⁷

Most of M42’s gas is hydrogen, churned into swirls by the blast of stellar winds from the stars within the cloud. With today’s telescopes we confirm there are no “Herschel tubes” visible—although the nebula presents a shallow concave face in our direction—and the dark region near the Trapezium is an opaque cloud obscuring the light from behind, not a deep cavern.²⁸



For devout Adventists, evidence of their hopes was never just a question for science or church leadership. Orion is a sign.

Growing a Legend

Two years after that pivotal 1846 meeting with Joseph Bates, Ellen White related her vision of earth's last hours:

Dark, heavy clouds came up and clashed against each other. The atmosphere parted and rolled back; then we could look up through the open space in Orion, whence came the voice of God. The Holy City will come down through that open space.²⁹

That quote would be repeated many times in Adventist publications, and it is the only statement White ever made regarding Orion's open space. Years later, she wrote of her 1846 meeting with Bates, but she said nothing regarding Orion.³⁰ The story of the opening expanded in the telling and became part of Adventist lore through the writings of other Adventist authors. White, however, never confirmed or denied the stories.

In an 1886 article for *The Review and Herald*, J.N. Loughborough recounted the meeting between Bates and White, adding details about Orion's nebula and the Rosse telescope.³¹ White's Orion opening was now firmly identified with M42. In 1900, General Conference President O.C. Godsmark wrote that behind the clouds in Orion was God's throne:

As we view this wonder, we cannot but feel that God in his mercy is permitting us to see a little of the glory of that city above...³²

The Adventists' Orion opening story would reach its apex in Dr. Lucas Reed's 1919 book, *Astronomy and the Bible*. Although by 1900 most astronomers had abandoned the theory of nebular openings, Adventist writers still looked for support in the science community. They found Dr. Edgar Larkin, director of Mount Lowe Observatory, and a dabbler in religions. Larkin saw in M42 "a deep opening, receding into the mighty distance beyond." The Seventh-day Adventist Southern California Conference office took notice and paid Larkin a visit in 1911. Dr. Larkin's articles and quotes were used in several Adventist publications, including Reed's 1919 book, in which he makes several errors in citing Larkin. However, for Reed, Orion was clearly the center of the universe.³³

Shutting Orion

Through the 1960's, Adventist authors repeated Reed's ideas and contradictions in Adventist publications. In 1976, however, the *The Review and Herald* published an article by two Adventist scientists, Sprengel and Martz, critically examining the Orion opening story. They found that M42 does not show an opening into deeper space, nor is Orion the center of the universe. Further, they showed that the

M42 opening idea was not based on Ellen White's statements but on Bates' beliefs. They concluded that the identity of the opening into heaven would become clear when Jesus appears.³⁴

This worthy study missed the full significance of the Opening among Adventists. Although in its inception the Orion story drew support from the science of that time, the authority of Ellen White's single statement gave it lasting credence. It is possible that she later changed her mind; her single statement appears to refer to a known object, "the opening," not to "an opening" that could appear at the time of some future event. Since she never mentioned the Orion opening again, we don't know if she continued to believe in a specific opening in the nebula in spite of new evidence from science. Nevertheless, Adventist readers understand her statement to endorse an existing opening in Orion through which Jesus will return.

When science and *The Review and Herald* withdrew support from the opening, Ellen White's single authoritative statement remained. For devout Adventists, evidence of their hopes was never just a question for science or church leadership. Orion is a sign. Like Joseph Bates in 1846, they see within Orion's glow the hope of God's presence drawing near to bestow his favor. That is an opening that cannot be shut.

The Great Fool and the Little Heap

Orion is mentioned three times in the Bible, twice in Job and once in Amos. Each time it is mentioned with the Pleiades. Orion's name in Hebrew is Chesil (or Kciyl), "the Fool."³⁵ In the legends of Job's time, Orion was a proud giant who believed he could challenge God and instead showed himself a fool. In some Hebrew legends, he is Nimrod ("we shall rebel"), the proud founder of cities. Because of his arrogance, he was confined to his place in the firmament and destined to rotate with the seasons. Henceforth, Orion brought winter, which bound as with icy "cords" the land and the hands of men.³⁶

The Pleiades are called Kimah, "The Heap," and are a little "heap" of stars in Taurus that emerge from behind the sun in spring, and are associated with the joy of that season. Orion and the Pleiades are apparently mentioned together in the Bible to contrast the seasons; the "sweet influences" of spring, vs. the frigid bonds of winter.³⁷

Amos delivers the terrible message to Israel, "Prepare to meet your God!" (Amos 4:13). Judgment was coming—a judgment Israel neither expected nor feared. "Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light!" (5:18). They served Sakkuth and Kiyun, the star gods that they made for themselves (5:26). "He who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns blackness into dawn and darkens day into night, the Lord is His name" (5:8). And yet—the One who rules the ordinances of heaven is coming with terrible judgment, yet he extends grace and pleads, "Seek me and live" (5:4).

God showed his majesty to his friend Job another way. After being smitten with calamity, Job sat outside in the dirt,

scratching his boils and arguing with his friends about his innocence. Every night, the sight of Orion wheeling overhead would have been a cold reminder of his plight. He complains, “How can a man be in the right before God?” (Job 9:2). “He...who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades” (Job 9:9) is strong and wise beyond our understanding. “Behold, he snatches away, who can turn him back? Who will say to him, ‘What are you doing?’” (Job 9:12). Orion and the stars demonstrate to Job God’s terrible wisdom and power. When he contemplates them, Job wishes to bring suit against the ultimate enemy, God. He demands a vindicator who can save him and hold God accountable. He desperately wants to see God in person.

Recently, a colleague saw me reading Job and said, “If that book is true, then God is unjust!” “Really,” I said, “How so?” He said, “Well, think of all the innocent deaths of Job’s family.” My friend said with passion, “Someone’s got to hold him accountable!” Job says in 19:25, “For I know that my redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.” If God’s frightening power needs checks and balances, a third party must save us from him. But who can fill the role of this “someone”?

After 32 chapters, Job argues his three friends into silence, for he is “righteous in his own eyes.” Young Elihu ably defends God’s goodness and majesty, but the real showdown arrives in a raging storm. Job now meets his Tormentor in person, and the judgment day he demanded has suddenly arrived.

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” God was present the whole time while Job put him on trial. Now Job is quiet while God interrogates him.

“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?”

“Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?”

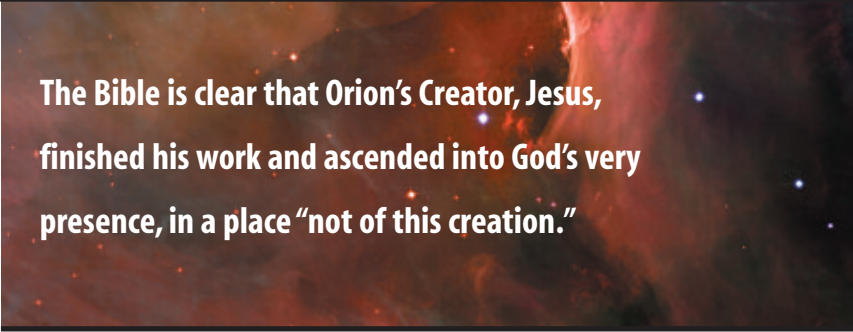
Do we? That is a good question for learned men of all times. Just what is gravity, and how about “dark energy” and “dark flow”? What preceded the Big Bang, if there was one? Tell us, if you have understanding. After all the accomplishments of modern astronomy, the composition of most of the universe eludes us.³⁸ There is only One with the wisdom to create and to know the stars. “He upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3b).

God asks, “Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?” (Job 40:8b). In Chapter 42, Job finally sees his ignorance, that he has no legal standing to judge God. John Piper describes how Job comes to repentance:

“I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted...”(v. 2). *Job submits to God’s sovereignty.*

“I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me...”(v. 3b). *Job submits to God’s wisdom and his word.*

“Now my eye sees you, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (v. 5b-6). *Job repents of his demands and his pride.*³⁹ There can be no “checks and balances” on God. When he sees that his Tormentor and his Redeemer are one, he lays down his lawsuit, and he finds grace.



The Bible is clear that Orion’s Creator, Jesus, finished his work and ascended into God’s very presence, in a place “not of this creation.”

Where is Our Redeemer?

When we need hope and consolation, we long for God to show himself and make things right. Like Job, we yearn for an audience; “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments” (Job 23:3,4).

Oh, how Joseph Bates and his friends wanted an audience, a manifestation of His presence! They looked for a sign from Him in the dim reflections of larger metal mirrors and newer prophecies. The opening in Orion, along with Ellen White’s visions, gave them a sense of God’s visitation.

Does God’s throne have an address among the constellations? God sets his “glory *above* the heavens” (Ps. 8:1). King Solomon said, “Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you...” (I Kings 8:27). He is near *and far*, as he declares in Jeremiah 23:23, “Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away?”

Jesus, our Redeemer, has ascended above all the stars, for he “has passed *through* the heavens,” and is “set apart from sinners, exalted *above the heavens*” (Heb. 4:14, 7:26). He appeared in the “more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, *not of this* creation), he entered once for all into the holy places...” (Heb. 9:11). God’s throne is too lofty to have coordinates on our celestial maps. He is not constrained by His universe, or anything in it.

Our Redeemer was exalted to the very presence of God and sat down at his right hand—because He was an equal, and because His atonement was finished. “For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Since we have “such a high priest,” we may boldly draw near the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). In Christ we ascend, “even to His seat.” We will always stand in His presence and will always be right with Him, “perfected,” once for all. He has that kind of authority; His work is that complete. There is no greater glory than that which shines from God’s right hand.

We don’t need to gaze at Orion’s sword nearby to find God’s glory. Orion’s gaseous clouds contain no hope of life. Our Hope dwells in a high and holy place, in eternity. Only because He is the lofty, overwhelming Sovereign can we believe His promises to keep us forever with His indwelling Spirit. The terrifying Creator of Orion is our Shepherd. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand...I and the Father are one” (Jn. 10:27-30).

Summary

God’s total, unfathomable sovereignty over all creation is essential to our confidence in his saving power. The Bible is clear that Orion’s Creator, Jesus, finished His work and

ascended into God's very presence, in a place "not of this creation." There is no biblical evidence that he uses an Orion opening in his travels to earth. Additionally, the Orion opening concept has been abandoned by science. The questions arise: why did Ellen White endorse in vision the idea of a celestial opening, and why does this idea still persist among Adventists?

In retrospect it seems that Ellen White quoted in vision the words that she knew would be convincing to her listeners at that time. Her vision did help confirm her prophetic status in Joseph Bates' mind. Moreover, the notion of a visible site marking the gateway to heaven has made God seem more tangible and accessible. This idea also supports the shared

paradigm of a "remnant church" that was given special knowledge of God's plans. Yet God cannot be reduced or identified by a physical place. He is "set apart" above the heavens, and He dwells in the hearts of those who are born of the Spirit. He is farther than Orion, and nearer than our thoughts (Psalm 139:4).

Would you enter boldly into God's presence? Then draw near, friend, and lay down your weapons! Repent of your demands, and submit to His sovereign authority! Submit to His word without reservation. Like Job, we can have peace with our Sovereign, and see Him with our own eyes. †

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All scriptural references are from the *English Standard Version*.

MYSTERY

CAROLYN MACOMBER

Dedicated to my Savior and my Jr. high English teacher, Colleen Tinker

MYSTERY

Life itself

MYSTERY

A cell dividing, multiplying, dividing again into one solitary heart beat.

MYSTERY

A baby's cries, coos, and gurgles forming into syllables of mama, dada.

MYSTERY

A boy child's disregard of little girls and a girl child's disregard of little boys – turning to interest, intrigue, first love.

MYSTERY

Two personalities learning to blend their lives in work, in play, in love.

MYSTERY

**A universe set to perfect synchronized motion, planets dancing in solar systems,
never colliding, flowing with graceful ease.**

MYSTERY

BUT the greatest of all ...

He spoke and stars appeared ...

He spoke and flowers bloomed ...

He breathed and man inhaled ...

MYSTERY

Then He cried, His diaper needed changing. He cried for the man He breathed into life to feed Him.

MYSTERY

His existence knew no boundaries, until He was contained in a body He had created.

MYSTERY

A love so passionate, He willingly allowed His own suffering, His own agonizing death.

MYSTERY

Death DIED, because His grace won

MYSTERY

The spiritually dead have opportunity for RESURRECTED life.

MYSTERY

Holy, Holy, Holy,

Jesus, Lord, God, Almighty

He was, He is, He is coming.

MYSTERY

He spoke, He breathed, He cried, He suffered, He died, He will return to bring His "children" home.

MYSTERY

Now, He chooses to live in passionate union with those He breathed into existence

MYSTERY

Born Again

MYSTERY

Life Itself

MYSTERY

And the wind blows ...

MYSTERY



Carolyn Macomber grew up Adventist and now attends The Chapel (Evangelical Free Church) in St. Joseph, MI. She wrote the poem while traveling on an airplane to her first FAF weekend, February, 2009. She finished the poem while at the conference. Her discovery of the finished work of the Lord Jesus happened through several personal dialogues with a Bible Study Fellowship teaching leader. This beautiful discovery took place while she was studying at Andrews University for her doctorate.



Does Paul conflict with Jesus?

DALE RATZLAFF

Recently, I was sitting in an audience where I heard an Adventist pastor say something to the effect that Paul had his disagreements with Jesus. Deeply disturbed, I realized his is not an isolated opinion. I believe the underlying reason many Adventists say that Paul misunderstood Jesus is that Paul makes many statements that show new covenant Christians are not under old covenant law, and he portrays the Sabbath as a ritual law which is not for today. These teachings of Paul undermine the Adventist claim that the Sabbath is required for all Christians today. To support this notion that Paul disagrees with Jesus, Adventists often use Peter's statement in 2 Peter 3:16 that Paul wrote some things that are hard to understand.

Our method of study here—as always—is to seek to discover what both Jesus and Paul taught about the law. We start by studying all the places in all four Gospels where Jesus uses the word “commandment” or the plural “commandments”, and “law” or its plural “laws”. When we come to Paul and the law, the amount of material available is beyond the scope of this article. I recommend that those who wish to do a more in-depth study of Paul's teaching on law read *Sabbath in Christ*.

Law and commandments in the Gospels

Jesus used the word “law” a total of 35 times in the gospels. Not even once, however, are the Ten Commandments in view. In every instance the context shows that “law” refers to the whole law or to sections of the Torah other than the Ten Commandments.¹ It is also of interest to note that the plural “laws” is never used in the Gospels, thus indicating that Jesus (as well as the Gospel writers) well-understood that the word “law” referred to the Torah or some section of it. Jesus used the word “commandment” or “commandments” a total of 24 times in the Gospels.² Of these only five have reference to the Ten Commandments,³ and these represent only two incidents: (1) Jesus' answer to the Pharisees explaining why His disciples did not follow the tradition of the elders but ate bread with impure hands (Mt. 15:1–9; Mk. 7:5–13); and (2) the discussion with the rich young ruler (Mt. 19:16–26; Mk. 10:17–22; Lk. 18:18–27).

The above facts came as a surprise to me when I discovered them. I also discovered that in the writings of John, the words “commandment” or “commandments” never refer to the Ten Commandments.⁴ Let us carefully study the two incidents where Jesus does refer to the Ten Commandments.

Tradition vs. Commandments

“Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, “Honor your father and mother,” and, “He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.” But you say, “Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever I have that would help you has been given

to God,’ he is not to honor his father or his mother.” And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men” (Mt. 15:1–9).

In the above account Jesus pointed out the difference between following the “traditions of men” and the “Commandment of God”. The tradition in question regarded the then-current Jewish ritual of washing hands before eating. This practice was not done for sanitary reasons but was a washing to make them ritually clean in the event their hands had “brushed against a Gentile or against something belonging to a Gentile.”⁵ We should note that included in this “Commandment of God”, not only is a person commanded to honor his/her father and mother,—one of the Ten Commandments—but “he who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.”⁶ Jesus said that both of these commands are from God. This understanding agrees with the statements in the Gospels which quote some portion of the writings of Moses other than the Ten Commandments as the “law of the Lord.”⁷ The law clearly stated that a person was not to add or subtract anything from the Torah.⁸

“Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it” (Deut. 12:32).

The Rich Young Ruler

This account is in all the Synoptic Gospels; we will study the account of Matthew with some information added from Mark and Luke.

“And someone came to Him and said, ‘Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?’ And He said to him, ‘Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ Then he said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property” (Mt. 19:16–22).

Mark says that this man ran up to Christ, knelt, and called him “Good teacher”. Luke adds that he was a ruler, and Matthew says he was a young man who owned much property. This rich young ruler did not ask Jesus how to be saved. Rather, he recognized Jesus as a “Good Teacher” and wanted to know what “good thing” he needed to do to obtain eternal life. Jesus' answer is brief but loaded. First, note that Jesus said there is only One who is good. Let us never forget this truth. Then Jesus directed him to the written Word of God, “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” This young man then asks “which ones?”—there are 613 commandments in the Torah plus hundreds of others that

were added by the Jewish teachers. Jesus then quotes from the second table of the Ten Commandments. To this the rich young ruler says, “All these things I have kept, what am I still lacking?” Here we see that keeping the commandments does not bring true assurance and peace with God. He, the obedient commandment keeper, recognized his continuing lack. One never knows if his law keeping is “good enough”.

At this point Jesus says “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” The fact that this man went away grieving because he was wealthy shows that he was not willing to trust his future to Christ. What Jesus was seeking to do was to show him that no matter what “good thing” he did, it would not bring him eternal life. Jesus’ telling him to keep the commandments was not giving him a method for getting to heaven; rather, the commandments were given to point out sin. Focusing on the commandments would result in his realizing he had intractable sin and that he needed grace—which in the old covenant was typified by the sacrifices.

We must also note here that Jesus does not ask everyone to sell their possessions. Joseph of Arimathaea was a rich disciple. Abraham, Job and Solomon were wealthy. What Christ is doing here is twofold. First, He was saying the young man had to be willing to give up the thing that held him back from following Jesus. Second, He was showing that there is nothing we can do to inherit eternal life but to trust in Him. What follows in the next few verses confirms this interpretation.

And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” And looking at them Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” Mt. 19:23–26).

Some have tried to call both the camel and the eye of a needle metaphors. However, the context supports a literal rendering of both. The disciples were astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” They understood the impossibility of the situation. Jesus’ answer confirms, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Therefore, when taken as a whole, the incident of the rich young ruler teaches that only God is really “good”, that keeping the moral commandments of the law is good but not sufficient to save, and that the commandments are designed to cause us to realize that we still lack the goodness for eternal life. To be saved, one must trust Christ alone for salvation.

Some may want to include Matthew 5:17–19 as a reference to the Ten Commandments. However, we have shown clearly that the law in this section cannot be limited to the Ten Commandments but includes the whole Torah. If one is going to use this reference to enforce the law, then he/she is going to have to enforce all the laws of Torah.⁹

Summarizing the teachings of Christ on the Ten

Commandments, we note the following: Jesus included not only the Ten Commandments as operative but also the other moral laws in the Torah, even the laws that required the death sentence for their violation.

When considering the teachings of Jesus on the law we should keep several facts in mind. He was born under law¹⁰ and was circumcised as prescribed by the law.¹¹ Jesus observed many of the old covenant convocations.¹² His teachings include demands that people should honor the temple¹³ and present old covenant sacrifices.¹⁴ Jesus lived His earthly life in old covenant Israel, and Israel had to honor the old covenant until Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father. The Gospels record incidents from the life of Christ during the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant as Jesus demonstrated that He was the fulfillment of God’s promises to the patriarchs, as Romans 15:8 explains. Luke indicates that the transition between the old and new covenants started with the teachings of John the Baptist, and it was not an easy transition.

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it (Lk. 16:16).

There are many indications that Jesus was seeking to move His hearers away from the ritual laws of the old covenant that pointed forward to the Messiah because now He had come.¹⁵ Jesus was seeking to move people away from the old covenant which was a covenant between God and Israel only¹⁶ to the new covenant. The old covenant was designed for the people who lived in the Promised Land. The new covenant, however, was to include people from every nation, kindred and tongue.¹⁷ Unlike the old covenant, the covenant partners in the new are God the Father and God the son. Christ is our Covenant Keeper. We enter into the blessings of the new covenant by placing our faith in the finished work of Christ. The old covenant was filled with dozens of shadowy rituals. The new covenant, however, only has two rituals: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Law in the Epistles of Paul

It is beyond the scope of this short article to do a thorough study of Paul’s use of law. Following are some points Paul makes about the law. For those who wish a more thorough study, I suggest again that you read *Sabbath in Christ*.

- The righteousness of God is manifested outside the realm of law.¹⁸
- We are justified by faith without the works of the law.¹⁹
- The law is not nullified by faith.²⁰
- Faith establishes the law.²¹
- The law brings about wrath.²²
- Where there is no law, there is no violation.²³
- The law is holy, just and good.²⁴
- We were made to die to the law through the body of Christ.²⁵
- Sinful passions are aroused by the law.²⁶
- We have been released from the law.²⁷
- Apart from law sin is dead.²⁸

- The law was given 430 years after Abraham²⁹
- The law was added at the time of Moses.³⁰
- The reign of law was from Moses until Christ.³¹
- The law is not contrary to the promises of God.³²
- The law served to lead to Christ.³³
- Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the law.³⁴
 - For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse.³⁵
 - Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them.³⁶
 - The law is not of faith.³⁷
 - The whole law is fulfilled in one word: the statement, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.³⁸
 - If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.³⁹
 - Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.⁴⁰
 - Christ abolished in His flesh the law of commandments in ordinances.⁴¹

The Authority of the Epistles of Paul

The underlying question in many of the communications we receive regarding the teachings of Paul on the topic of law deal with Paul's apostolic authority. Some Adventists indicate that one cannot trust what Paul wrote because he disagrees with Jesus and undermines the law. We believe that when one understands the covenants and the simple gospel of grace there is no disagreement. However, for those who do question Paul, the following points should be considered.

- Paul was miraculously called by the risen Jesus to be an Apostle.⁴²
- Paul received his gospel through a revelation directly from Christ.⁴³
- Paul's gospel was identical with that taught by Peter and the other Apostles.⁴⁴
- Peter recognized Paul's writings as Scripture.⁴⁵
- Paul's epistles have been included in the Christian canon of Scripture by every serious Christian throughout the history of the Christian church.⁴⁶
- Paul's ministry in New Testament times was the most productive of all the Apostles.⁴⁷
- The theology of the gentile church, which was initially founded by Peter and then developed by Paul has proven to be the most successful theology.
- The teachings of Paul in general, and his teachings on justification by faith in particular, have been at the heart of nearly every true revival in the history of the church.⁴⁸

Therefore, we conclude that those who reject the teach-

ings of Paul should ask themselves if they are really members of the true, Christian church. Paul's epistles and the teaching contained therein provide a large part of Christianity theology.

I conclude with a text that has become dear to my heart.

"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Phil. 3:8, 9). †

Endnotes

¹Mt. 5:17, 18; 7:12; 11:13; 12:5; 22:36, 40; 23:23; Lk. 2:22, 23, 24, 27, 39; 5:17; 10:26; 16:16, 17; 25:44, Jn. 1:17, 45; 7:19, 23, 49, 51; 8:5, 17; 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; 18:31; 19:7.

²Mt. 5:19; 15:3; 19:17; 22:36, 38, 40; Mk. 7:8, 9; 10:5, 19; 12:28, 31; Lk. 1:6; 18:20; 23:56; Jn. 10:18; 12:49, 50; 13:34; 15:12, Jn. 10:18; 12:49, 50; 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12.

³Mt. 19: 17; Mk. 7: 8, 9; 10:19; Lk 18:20; 23:56.

⁴See *Sabbath in Christ*, p. 374–376 for all the listings of both "commandment" and "law" in the writings of John.

⁵See R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament*, Matthew, p. 582.

⁶Ex. 21:17.

⁷Lk. 2:24, 39.

⁸See Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Biblical Literacy*, p. 569 where he lists these two commands as Nos. 454 and 454 of the 613 commandments.

⁹*Sabbath in Christ*, p. 265–278.

¹⁰Gal. 4:4.

¹¹Lk. 2:21.

¹²Lk. 2:41, 42; 22:11; Jn. 2:13; 5:1; 7:2, 10; 10:22.

¹³Mk. 11:15–18.

¹⁴Mt. 5:23, 24.

¹⁵See *Sabbath in Christ*, Jesus and Ritual law.

¹⁶Ex. 20:1, 2; 31:13, 16, 17; Deut. 5:1–3.

¹⁷Mt. 28:19,

¹⁸Rom. 3:21.

¹⁹Rom. 3:28.

²⁰Rom. 3:31.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Rom. 4:15.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Rom. 5:12

²⁵Rom. 7:4.

²⁶Rom. 7:5.

²⁷Rom. 7:6.

²⁸Rom. 7:8.

²⁹Gal. 3:17.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Gal. 3:21.

³³Gal. 3:24.

³⁴Gal. 3:25.

³⁵Gal. 3:10.

³⁶Gal. 3:10

³⁷Gal. 3:12.

³⁸Gal. 5:14.

³⁹Gal. 5:18.

⁴⁰Gal. 6:2.

⁴¹Eph. 2:15.

⁴²Rom. 3:31

⁴³Acts 9; 22:6; 1 Cor. 15:7–10.

⁴⁴Gal. 1:11–16.

⁴⁵Gal. 2:6–9.

⁴⁶Pet. 3:16.

⁴⁷Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. P. 141.

⁴⁸It was the Gentile church that grew and spread Christianity. The Jewish Christian church did little evangelism.

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I am not a spiritual Israelite

AUTUMN MCMINIMY

As an Adventist, I was a spiritual Israelite. All my life I had believed that Adventism was “spiritual” or “modern” Israel, and I felt like one as I observed the Jewish Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, careful not to work, play, or entertain anything unsacred on that day. My food even tasted like an Israelite’s as I observed the Levitical food laws of clean and unclean meats.

I was told that I and my fellow Seventh-day Adventists kept Jesus from coming back the second time, that like ancient Israel, we were wandering in the wilderness with unperfected characters, keeping the entire planet from going into the Promised Land.

“For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years” (Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 696).

This delay was our fault. We, like ancient Israel, had not heeded the instruction given to us by our prophet. Israel had a succession of prophets. We had Ellen G. White: “The desolation of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah is a solemn warning to modern Israel, that the counsels and admonitions given them through chosen instrumentalities cannot be disregarded with impunity” (EGW, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 416). According to Mrs. White, I, as a “spiritual Israelite”, was in even greater danger than my ancient idolatrous counterparts: “Modern Israel are in greater danger of forgetting God and being led into idolatry than were His ancient people. Many idols are worshiped, even by professed Sabbathkeepers” (EGW, *Testimonies For The Church*, Vol. 1, p. 609). Anxiously, I felt that I had made things and people into idols and tried desperately to rid myself of these.

Although there was no temple standing, like a good Jew, I learned every detail of the sanctuary; the inner and outer courts, the holy and most holy compartments, the furniture, the services, and even the festivals. According to Mrs. White I lived in the anti-typical “Day of Atonement” and I

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had to “afflict” myself, not for just a day, but for my entire life. Like Israel of old I believed that if I had even one unrepented sin there would be horrifying consequences. The “close of probation”, a term that referred to a time when the door of God’s mercy would be shut tight to me forever, would be my doom. The “door” being “shut” at the time of the “midnight cry” I knew referred to Jesus’ parable of the wise and the foolish virgins. For me this parable remained a deadly mystery and was a source of keen anxiety.

Escalating Fear

“Lord, lord, Open up for us,” the foolish virgins cry as they knock on the door, begging to be let into the wedding. But the bridegroom’s answer to them is one of the most ominous in the entire Bible. “Truly I say to you, I do not know you” (Mt. 25:11, 12).

I would spiral into a panic attack every time I thought of it. Was I a foolish virgin? Was I a wise one? I simply had to know. What did the extra oil mean? And where did I go to buy this extra oil? Mrs. White warned; “The parable of the ten virgins was given by Christ Himself, and every specification should be carefully studied. A time will come when the door will be shut” (Manuscript, Vol.16, p. 270).

There were other places where Jesus used the same expression, “Lord, lord”, that struck fear into my heart. “‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you’...” (Mt. 7:22, 23).

As a “spiritual Israelite” Jesus’ words held nothing but fear for me. “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” My interpretation of this passage came from Mrs. White. “Before you are two ways—the broad road of self-indulgence and the narrow path of self-sacrifice. Into the broad road you can take selfishness, pride, love of the world; but those who walk in the narrow way must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset. Which road have you chosen—the road which leads to everlasting death, or the road which leads to glory and immortality?” (EGW, *Our High Calling*, p. 8). Oh, how earnestly I worked to enter in through that narrow gate. But as a “spiritual Israelite” I could not say or even feel that I was saved (EGW, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 155).

Parables come alive

One day, however, while reading the Gospels, I found a passage that paralleled the door-shutting, “I never knew you” passages that had terrified me. In Luke 13:25-30 Jesus once again warns of a door shutting on people who call Him “Lord”. As in the other passages, the people plead with Him, “‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will

answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’” However, how they answer Him back gave me a revelation that I had never before seen. “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets;’” I was absolutely stunned by this answer as it could never apply to me but only to those living at that time with Jesus! Excitedly I read on. After Jesus tells them to depart He says, “In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.” Again the realization hit me that he was speaking to the Jews of that time as He makes reference to the patriarchs and the prophets. But the last sentence intrigued me the most. “And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last” (Lk. 13:25-30).

“We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.” With these words new meaning flashed into my mind. Could it be that most of Jesus’ dire warnings in the gospels were meant for the people of His time? In this passage in Luke 13 it was these people in particular who have the door “shut” tight upon them while people from the east, west, north and south sit down with the patriarchs and the prophets. Who were these people from the four corners of the earth? With eyes opened now, I saw this contrast everywhere I looked in Scripture. “I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the darkness...” (Mt. 8:11, 12). I realized that the “sons of the kingdom” referred to the Hebrews.

I found that the familiar parable in Luke 14:23, 24 now held new meaning for me. “And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’” The men who were invited were the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And what was the dinner that Jesus was referring to? Why, it could only be the marriage supper of the Lamb, of course; the same dinner that the five foolish virgins could not share! In Matthew 22, Jesus tells the same parable except, instead of the invited guests merely making excuses, they mistreat the king’s slaves and even kill them. The king then destroys those “murderers” and sets their city on fire—the same way in which ancient Jerusalem was to be destroyed. Then he tells the slaves to gather together “all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.” This parable parallels the parable of the vineyard found in Matthew 19, Mark 12, and Luke 20 where the “vine-growers” mistreat and kill the owner’s slaves and finally his son. In Luke 20, when Jesus tells the chief priests and scribes that the owner will come and will “destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others,” they exclaim in horror,

“May it never be!”

Everywhere now it seemed my eyes saw things so clearly. I swept through the gospel of John and realized that the entire story centered on the controversy over Jesus being the Messiah and the Jews not believing in Him. John’s gospel is entirely about Jesus proving that He is the Promised One and the Jews’ subsequent rejection of Him. How had I missed this central theme, I wondered? Somehow, all those years, I had been too wrapped up in myself and in worrying about my own salvation to see what the Gospels were truly saying. Here I had been worrying about keeping the law when, 2,000 years ago, Jesus had been declaring to the Jews that “This is the work of God, that you believe in Whom He has sent” (Jn. 6:29). And since the Jews did not do the “work of God” by believing in Him, the gospel was then given to the gentiles, and throughout the book of Acts this spread of the gospel was the very thing that enraged the Jews. In fact, the evangelism of the gentiles is the reason the Jews persecuted Paul so viciously. The controversy in Acts was that salvation had been given to the gentiles—without the law! This previously hidden reality stuck in the craw of even the Jews who had become Christians!

I am a gentile!

As I kept reading and studying, the incredible truth dawned upon my mind. I wasn’t a spiritual Jew! I was a gentile! All of those horrible warnings Jesus had given had never been intended for me. Jesus had been pleading with a people who were about to kill their Messiah. Indeed, even before Jesus’ ministry, John the Baptist had warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem; “...do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up Children to Abraham” (Mt. 3:9, 10). I was one of

these very “stones” that John had been talking about. John’s statement that follows this declaration used to strike fear in my heart: “The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Mt. 3:11). Now I realized that John was warning the people of that generation that being the seed of Abraham would never save them. The term “already laid” meant that their time was almost up and the kingdom was about to be taken from them and given to others. And I was one of those “others” to whom the Kingdom of God was given when ancient Israel rejected Jesus. I was one of those from the east and west who would recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! I was one of those the slaves had gathered to fill His wedding hall—“both good and evil”. I was one of the ones who was last and therefore now would be first! I hadn’t rejected Jesus! I had accepted Him! I believed in Him! I was a believer!

And that narrow gate that I had found so elusive? That narrow gate is Jesus! It isn’t a lifestyle of doing the right works. No, Jesus was declaring to them that there was only one gate by which someone could be saved—and He was that gate. The gate is not a way of living; the gate is a Person—Jesus Christ, the Righteous! He was that “shut door” to Jerusalem of old because they would not believe in Him. “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved...” “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep” (Jn. 10:9, 7). That door was not shut to me. I had entered the door; I had believed. The door of probation would never close on me, for that door was Jesus!

I had finally found my true identity. I was not a “spiritual Israelite” living by old covenant laws. I was not a foolish virgin. I was a gentile believer under the new covenant. And I had finally found that narrow gate, that wonderful door. It was my precious Savior, Jesus Christ. †

Words of hope FROM BACK PAGE

that is set before us...” May I be able to complete the race that has been set before me. That is my prayer: that I will have strength to do the will of God, for the tasks that He has set for me to do, and to have the endurance and the patience to keep hoping and striving. This promise from Deuteronomy gives me that hope. God cares about our needs during our journey on this earth. He cares that we are strengthened for the challenges that we face. He empowers us when we don’t have the power ourselves. As Paul said, “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor. 8:9).

If I have strength that equals my days, it is really God’s strength that I have, because He gives it. This promise in Deuteronomy declares that when God loves us, He provides what we need, even when we don’t have it in us.

Deuteronomy 33 goes on to say, “There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (v. 26, 27a).

This gives me a picture of the amazing, omnipotent and omnipresent God, who fills the universe and holds us up with his arms. His love for each one of his creatures is unflagging, and his arms never tire of holding us up. He rides on the heavens to help us, His beloved. Who else wants to help us all the time, to hold us up all the time? I know we can’t see God, and that is the struggle that we have so often when we ask, “Where is God?” But these transcendental words from the Bible give us a flavor of what God has shown humanity from ancient times. Each of these words of hope, whether read in the text of Moses or shared from memory by Sylvia Venables, paint a beautiful picture from past to present of the love of our God. †

Beautiful truth of Scripture

Hello, everyone! Just wanted to let everyone at Life Assurance Ministries know how I appreciate your *Proclamation!* magazine! How wonderful to know the true gospel of Jesus, that we have eternal life in Jesus by faith alone—oh, the time and money I have wasted on Ellen G. White books!

No soul sleep—but we enter into the presence of Jesus at death! Colleen, your article about your mother facing her surgery and her hope and trust in Jesus touched my heart. How beautiful the truth of the Scripture! Gone are the sad, devastating doctrines of the Adventist church!

The love of the Father and Jesus is overwhelming. May God bless you in your work for Him.

HOT SPRINGS, AR

Devil having his way

Your messages in *Proclamation!* are certainly not Bible based. I cannot understand how you can be so deceived. The devil is working hard, going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He sure is having his way with all of you.

Please take our name off your mailing list. We do not want this magazine in our home.
RICHMOND, ME

Teaching sound doctrine

I came across a copy of your magazine *Proclamation!* (Vol. 10, issue 1, January/February 2009) and was interested in the issues regarding legalism and also the all-too-often misleading or inaccurate doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists. Many years ago as a new Christian, no one really taught me how to live the Christian life. So, to make a long story short, I learned by trial and error and went through a lot of sad episodes before I finally discovered how to do so, and your January/February 2009 issue really hit home.

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

I am also always concerned about sound doctrine, and I've always taken exception to Seventh-day Adventist teachers (they're good people, but I cannot accept many of their teachings). Your issue appears to teach sound doctrine.

I would like to subscribe to your magazine, starting with your January/February 2009 issue. I saw the copy at my job, so obviously I couldn't take it home, but I browsed through it. You don't indicate your subscription rates, so I decided to enclose a check...so that, at the very least, I can help offset printing costs. Thank you!

The main body of Adventism continued to be proselytizers, not accepting the fact that when one holds to the basics of the gospel, they are Christians. Why must you dear folk continue with this aberrancy you learned in Adventism? Get off your hobbyhorse. Make #1 in your outreach—as it was with St. Paul—1 Corinthians 15:3,4: the death and resurrection of our Lord and its significance to lost sinners.

Stand by what you believe wherein Adventism fails the litmus test that you hold as important. And would you pass the Calvinist teaching about divine election, the Pentecostal

Now let's be candid and honorable. Isn't this your motive with your magazine? You are proselytizers. You appear to not budge an inch. You are greater exegetes than the spiritual giants that met more than 50 years ago...

P.S. I have known the Lord for 32 years this April 6, and my relationship with Him has gotten better and deeper over the years.

MCKINLEYVILLE, CA

You are proselytizers

I knew Dr. Jim Boice and listened to his preaching almost every Sunday for over 20 years. He followed Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse as senior pastor of the very prestigious 10th Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, PA. He made a very significant and thoughtful statement: never argue about religion.

It appears that most of the contributors of the *Proclamation!* magazine are pursuing the style of engagement practiced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is understandable. My church and your former church had as its main approach, with other Christians of various denominations, plain and simple proselytism. Ignore what we have in common. Proof text them into a corner so they will not be able to move. Then they are more likely to accept Adventism. And not a few accept what they have learned without becoming Christians in the true sense of the word.

Now let's be candid and honorable. Isn't this your motive with your magazine? You are proselytizers. You appear to not budge an inch. You are greater exegetes than the spiritual giants that met more than 50 years ago at 10th Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia—men of integrity, who declared that even though they could not accept certain Adventist doctrines, Adventists were still of the household of faith. I personally witnessed this.

teaching about tongues, the Wesleyan disbelief in the doctrine of eternal security, or the avoidance of jewelry among some?

I have reservations with Pentecostals, certain Methodists, some Presbyterians, and much with Roman Catholicism. But I'll say without any reservations, God has His own in all these. And God also has His elect in the Adventist Church. The physician sending this letter is indeed of the elect. If you have questions about the doctrine of election, do read chapter one of Ephesians and Romans 8, 9, 10, and 11.

WALLINGFORD, PA

Editor's response: In order to answer the points you make, I refer to the “Introduction To the Annotated Edition” by George Knight in the republished *Questions on Doctrine* printed by Andrews University Press in 2003.

In his introduction, Knight acknowledges that in order to convince Walter Martin and Donald Barnhouse that Adventists were evangelical Christians, LeRoy Froom, W.E. Read, and R.A. Anderson actually misrepresented Adventist doctrine. The two points that were the hardest to explain were the atonement and the nature of Christ.

Knight says, “An atonement completed on the cross was problematic because Adventists tended to refer to the atonement in terms of the anti-typical Day of Atonement, which they believed had begun in 1844. Froom and his colleagues resolved the confusion between the evangelicals' use of the word ‘atonement’ and the Adventist terminology by speaking of the atonement ‘accomplished’ on the cross and the

atonement that was then currently being 'applied' in the heavenly sanctuary... The Adventist conferees believed themselves to be safe in making that verbal adjustment because Ellen White had used the word atonement in a similar fashion" (p. xv).

The question of Christ's nature was more difficult because both Ellen White and other Adventist authors wrote that Christ had taken

Adventist circles because they did not represent true Adventist belief.

Therefore, the fundamental premise of your letter, that Adventists are true Christians as evidenced by Barnhouse's acclaim, is a flawed premise. Barnhouse accepted Adventists as evangelicals on the basis of deception on the part of the Adventist leaders with whom he conversed.

Our magazine is not proselytizing Adventists into any other church or group. We exist to present the true, biblical gospel and to help Adventists discover the ways in which their beliefs conflict with Scripture. We exist to help Adventists meet the true, eternal, sinless Jesus of the Bible and to call them to integrity.

sinful nature. Moreover, Froom discovered that almost all Adventists believed Jesus took a sinful human nature.

"Not seeing any way around the problem, it appears that Froom and his colleagues were less than transparent on the denomination's position on the topic since the mid 1890s," Knight reports. (p. xv).

Knight states that Froom explained to the General Conference president that because "they were dealing with some fairly prejudiced and aggressive fundamentalist leaders," they used "a vocabulary that would be understood by the evangelicals" (p. xvi). Thus, in Knight's words, the Adventists "adjusted their language on the atonement" in order to "maintain their long-held theological beliefs while at the same time expressing their ideas in a way that matched the vocabulary and understandings of the evangelicals" (pp. xvi-xvii).

George Knight acknowledges that the Adventists manipulated "the data they presented on the human nature of Christ." Knight says, "...the issue of the change of position on the human nature of Christ was one of substance. Whether Froom and his colleagues were willing to admit it or not, the view of Christ's human nature that they set forth was a genuine revision of the position held by the majority of the denomination before the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*" (p. xvii).

Knight continues in his introduction to explain that the positions Froom *et al* presented to Martin and Barnhouse and later published in the now-out-of-print *Questions on Doctrine* created unhappiness and disagreement within

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If you are born again and hidden in Christ, you have already passed the judgment, because you have been baptized into His death and are in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5). If you have been born again and know the Lord Jesus, you will be increasingly uncomfortable with denominational additions to the gospel. Jesus will compel you to release to Him the unbiblical requirements you may have believed were necessary for salvation.

If you have not trusted the Lord Jesus and been born of the Spirit (John 3:5-6), neither your sincerity nor your discipline will qualify you for eternal life. If you haven't yet done so, lay your life before Jesus right now and ask Him to forgive your deep sin and to be your Savior.

False teaching

If anyone who truly cares about truth reads the March/April 2009 *Proclamation!*, they will have solid proof of Ratzlaff's false teaching provided by his building upon the clearly unscriptural insistence that "Christ took the pre-fall

nature of Adam." He then goes on to, once again, climb aboard his favorite childish hobby-horse and lambaste law and obedience. The Bible is absolutely clear on the matter; Hebrews 2:17 declares that Jesus was "made like unto His brethren." Adam had no "brethren". Verse 16 says that Jesus took the nature of "the seed of Abraham" which was long after Adam's fall! The Ratzlaff cult clearly flunks the test of 1 John 4:1-3. And when it comes to "the state of the dead", they directly contradict the clear teaching of Scripture, and even Jesus Himself—exactly like a multitude of other false teachers.

DEER PARK, WA

Editor's response: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead" (Acts 3:14-15a). "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin" (1 Jn. 3:5).

Marvelous thing

The Tour of Encouragement should be a marvelous thing! Praise God! Our prayers are with you. God bless in every way!

BELLE FOURCHE, SD

Not Christian

As I usually do, when I first received it I casually flipped through your recent magazine and was struck by the obvious—you're not a Christian. I read your magazine and had long ago noticed the addition of body piercings, dangling gold, and body paint—all marks of various pagan cultures. In the past I had simply ignored the obvious because "everybody's doing it," but this time it struck me, no less forcibly than a physical blow. In spite of your loud "we're Christians" profession, as you have left the church of God and directed your interests toward more pagan concepts, your adoption of pagan practices simply became the next logical step. In our current pagan culture body modification, scarification, various piercings, inking, and painting is quite a popular art form, though condemned for the people of God in both the Old and New Testaments.

I know you want to be "free" and really don't want to be Christians (true, it's not very popular), but you should at least be honest with your audience.

LANCASTER, TN

Thank you for support

It's been almost two years now since I left the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I have gone through a terrible emotional and spiritual experience during this period. However I would like to thank you and your staff for supporting me with each edition of *Proclamation!* that I have received. I cannot describe in words the support that came to me through this magazine during the difficult times. I also have read the books I've ordered from you about one thousand times! The Bible has a completely different meaning for me. I am still praying for my friends in the church, but they refuse to study any of the given material.

MODIMOLLE, SOUTH AFRICA

Inspiration

I have been receiving your magazine, and it is an inspiration. I left the Adventist church in 1980 and found the truth of the gospel. How wonderful to read your magazine, which helps

to liberate me more from this cultic church.
HOT SPRINGS, AR

"Tour" responses

Following are a few responses from the first meetings of the Tour of Encouragement held in Auburn, California. They are answers to the question, "What prompted you to come to these meetings?"

- I'm a transitioning Adventist lay member. I'm seeking truth and trying to decipher the origins of my beliefs and get to a Bible-only basis instead of holding Adventist/Ellen White-tainted beliefs. I feel as though I was brainwashed!

- I'm greatly interested in what is taught [so I can] be ready to refute false doctrine in a proper manner [in order] to present the truth in Jesus Christ.

- My great aunt and uncle lived at College Place, Washington. They and their families were life-long Adventists. My wife and I were evangelical missionaries to Mexican Indians in the state of Pueblo, Mexico, for 30 years.

- I want to know the truth about Adventism. I want to be an informed witness if I have an opportunity.

- I was curious; I never realized the cultic "stuff". Scary! Thank you for your information and sharing of resources.

- I came to learn about the Adventist religion.

- Very informative; I will pray for your safety.

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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SUMMER 2009

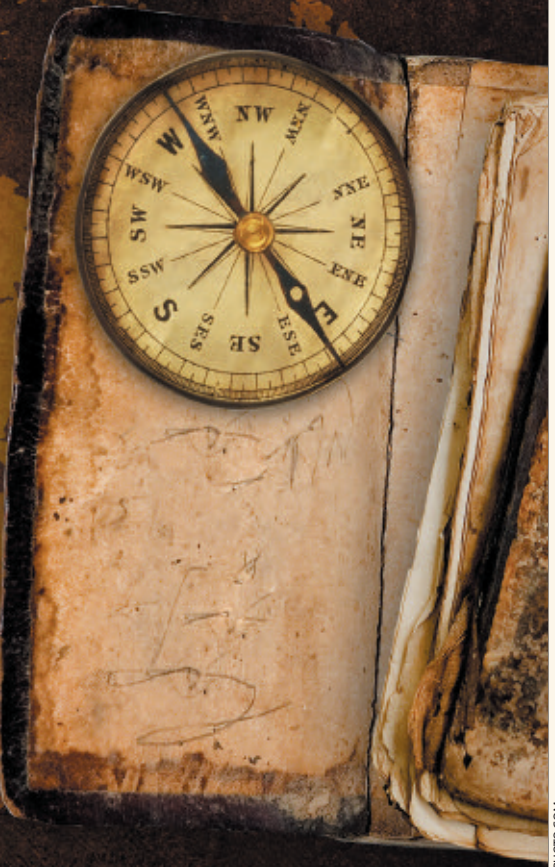
Tour of Encouragement

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff, along with Richard and Colleen Tinker, are traveling this summer on a Tour of Encouragement. Paul Carden will also attend the St. Joseph meeting. The Auburn and Roseburg meetings were wonderful times of meeting former Adventist friends and fellow followers of Jesus. We look forward to seeing you at a future meeting. Venues and dates include:

- June 9, 10** Sacramento/Auburn, CA, First Baptist Church of Auburn
- June 12, 13** Roseburg/Days Creek, OR, Foundation Fellowship
- June 26, 27** Lincoln, NE, Berean Church
- July 7, 8** St. Joseph/Berrien Springs, MI, Chapel Ev. Free Church
- July 10, 11** Miamisburg, OH, New Hope Community Church
- August 4, 5** Huntsville, AL, Whitesburg Baptist Church

Updates and more information are posted at: www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org. If you live near one of these areas, mark the dates and plan to attend!

If you plan to attend one of these meetings and need more information you may email us at dale@ratzlaf.com, or phone toll free (877) 349-6984. We look forward to meeting you!



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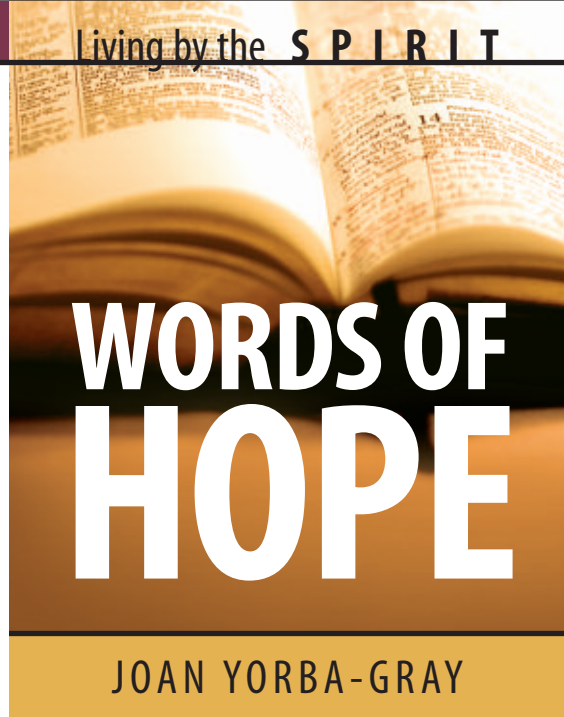
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Living by the S P I R I T

Sometimes in life we need a person to give us a word of encouragement from the Bible that helps us in our journey. When one lives with a life-threatening condition, the main worry is that death is just around the corner. Living with a serious health condition carries the weight of knowing that a serious flu, an infection, a strong germ, a cancer, or an organ failure can carry us to the end of our earthly passage. Everyone knows that they will die one day, but living with HIV/AIDS makes that a more pressing reality.

When someone comes along with words of hope, they are a hook that I can hang my hope on, especially if those words come from the Bible. I have been very blessed to meet our Anglican Archbishop Gregory Venables and his dear wife Sylvia. My husband Galen, my pastor Russell, and I arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, after a very long flight in the middle of the night. Sylvia greeted us warmly with a snack of tea and toast before we took our brief two-hour nap in her warm and

cozy home before travelling on to Salta, Argentina. Even though it was around 2 or 3 AM, she graciously hosted us as if we had arrived at tea time. What a servant's heart!



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When someone comes along with words of hope, they are a hook that I can hang my hope on, especially if those words come from the Bible.

After we took our rest, it was Sylvia who helped us get going again early in the morning for our flight, making sure that we didn't oversleep. When I asked her how she had managed to get up so early, she said that she had just stayed up all night. She had occupied herself by reading my book *In His Shadow* while we were sleeping and expressed that she had really appreciated it. I was overcome with gratitude for her hospitality, care, and interest in our lives and ministry, yet she was only concerned about our comfort and well-being, seemingly mindless of her need for rest while we were under her roof. Archbishop Gregory had the same type of care for us, and I will always consider it a privilege to have met them.

Last year the Venables' visited California, and I briefly saw Sylvia again. As usual, her concern was to minister to others. I told her that I was concerned about my

health and the fact that I seemed to be getting weaker. She shared a beautiful promise from the Old Testament which was made to Asher in Deuteronomy 33:25, "The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and *your strength will equal your days*" [Italics mine].

I ask the Lord for my strength to equal my days. Hebrews 12:1 says, "...and let us run with patience the race

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Joan Yorba-Gray and her husband Galen translate *Proclamation!* into Spanish. Galen has a PhD in Spanish and is on the Spanish faculty at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California. Joan used to work as a licensed clinical social worker. The two of them oversee the Hispanic area of He Intends Victory, a ministry for people who are HIV positive. Between them they have five grown children. Joan has lived with HIV/AIDS since 1988 and has faced many health challenges. Recently in the winter of 2008/2009 she suffered some health setbacks. Due to the Lord's goodness and the work of wonderful doctors, Joan has recovered and gives God all the glory.