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Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

FALL 2012
VOLUME 13, ISSUE 3

Healed from my shame

Walking in the Spirit

**Living in the Church
the Body of Christ**

**WILL YOU SEND YOUR
OLDEST SON AWAY?**

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COLLEEN TINKER

Living by the Spirit

When Richard and I began attending Trinity Church after we were born again and left Adventism, we were like two people who had been lost in the desert and had nearly died from thirst. The clear expository Bible teaching each week poured life into us and fed us deeply, and we began to see reality differently and to think differently. Our knowledge and discernment increased, and we began to be able to “approve the things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:9-10) as we heard Scripture taught from a good hermeneutic and learned to submit to it as we lived. The changes we experienced amazed us as God began to calm

Over the years we have been criticized for trusting God’s word as our source of power and transformation...

our life-long fears, fill our deep pockets of discontent, and taught us to learn to trust Him.

Fourteen years later, we are still clinging to God’s word as the powerful gift He has given us. He continues to incorporate its truth and reality into our minds and hearts, and we are finding that, just as His word promises, His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9) because He has already seated us with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). We are not to be anxious (Phil. 4:6) because He has promised that He knows what we need, and if we seek His kingdom and righteousness first, “all these things will be added to [us]” (Mt. 6:33).

In other words, God’s word has become the source of our ability to discern because by it we continue “to be renewed in the spirit of our minds” (Eph. 4:23). Scripture continues to be the means of God’s healing in the most broken places of our hearts because the Holy Spirit teaches us to trust Him like a weaned child (Ps. 131:2) as we allow His word to show us our deepest self-deceptions and intentions (Heb. 4:12). God’s word transforms us as we learn to trust His love to cast out our fear (1 Jn. 4:18) and to trust His Spirit to intercede for us in our weakness even when we do not know how to pray (Rom. 8:26).

Over the years we have been criticized for trusting God’s word as our source of power and transformation as through it the Spirit teaches us truth and reality. We have been told to seek for “something more”. We have been urged to expect signs and wonders; we have been challenged to practice disciplines and methods of prayer that would increase

our spirituality and inner healing. Conversely, we have also been told that unless we adhere to rigid formulae explaining how God saves His elect we are anti-gospel, and that living by the Spirit’s power means we deny the sufficiency of Scripture.

Yet it is Scripture that resolves these conflicts and reveals what is true. God has promised that we are His heirs, that all that is His is ours when we are in Christ. It is by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:12-17), but these facts cannot happen unless we are born again and hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3). The Holy Spirit is never to be the object of our longing and pursuit; rather, the Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus and our position in Him. Similarly, Scripture is never to be approached as an objective instruction book; rather it is God’s own word, and we understand it only as we trust Him to reveal its depth and to teach us His reality in its words.

In this issue Martin Carey explores the story of Hagar and juxtaposes it with Paul’s command to “cast out the bondwoman” as God’s way of ushering us from slavery to the law into the life of the Spirit-driven new covenant. Chris Badenhorst explains how God restores His image in us by giving us life through His Spirit and by giving us the Spirit’s power as we look to Jesus. Dale Ratzlaff writes about the benefits we receive by being in Christ and living in His body, and Liz Church shares her faith story. In addition, we included the account of Richard Tinker being commissioned as an elder. We also have our regular columnists Rick Barker, Chris Lee, and Carolyn Macomber, and we share with you a report from our first annual Former Adventist Fellowship conference in Michigan.

We pray you will experience the transformation of believing in the Lord Jesus and being born again, thus receiving all the blessings God promises as you learn to trust Him and to act on His word. †

For further **S T U D Y**

- Back issues of *Proclamation!* and the blog site **ProclamationMagazine.com**
- Books and other materials by Dale Ratzlaff **Ratzlaf.com**
- Day by day commentary on the Sabbath School lessons **BibleStudiesForAdventists.com**
- Testimonies, Bibles studies, and the forum **FormerAdventist.com**

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Founding Editor **Dale Ratzlaff**

Editor **Colleen Tinker**

Design Editor **Richard Tinker**

Copy Editor **Cristine Cole**

Contributing Editors **Rick Barker, Martin L. Carey, Chris Lee, Carolyn Macomber**

Proofreader **Carolyn Ratzlaff**

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Web: LifeAssuranceMinistries.org
E-mail: proclamation@gmail.com

LIFE ASSURANCE
MINISTRIES

How can you have life assurance?

How can you have what you call “life assurance” when you are not keeping God’s commandments?

A thorough answer to this important question is beyond the scope of this page. I assume that by “God’s commandments”, the questioner refers to our understanding of the Sabbath. We have addressed this part of the question many times both in *Proclamation!* and in our books. However, there are theological crosswinds blowing against the assurance of salvation which I believe can push us off either side of the Road Ahead.

The East Wind

There are those who take the biblical teachings of sovereign election and the perseverance of the saints out of context and tend to ignore the need to be born again. These people say the elect of God will keep His commandments (understood to be the eternal moral laws of God) and cannot fall away. Thus, people who once appeared to be loyal, committed believers who later renounce Christ and no longer walk with him never were part of God’s elect. Christians are admonished to make certain of their calling and election, and since the new birth is often overlooked in this paradigm, they measure their “election” by obedience. Without consistent obedience, they have no assurance that they are God’s elect. This view moves the basis of assurance away from the righteousness which is in Christ to personal obedience—a precarious foundation for assurance with God.

The West Wind

There are others who believe that the assurance of salvation is based upon genuine belief in Christ. They, too, are admonished to a life of obedience. In this paradigm, however, believers who are no longer walking with God have “fallen away” and have lost their salvation because they no longer have active faith. If this understanding is true, then there really is no assurance because



Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff have authored five books concerning Adventism: *Sabbath in Christ*—a volume that explains new covenant Sabbath rest, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*—explores the unique doctrine of a pre-advent judgment that decides eternal destinies, *Truth About Adventist “Truth”*—a little book that’s perfect to give to Christians that need to understand Adventism, *Truth Led Me Out*—in which Dale Ratzlaff tells his own story of following Jesus, no matter the cost, and *My Cup Overflows*—Carolyn’s autobiography. Each of these books is available at Ratzlaff.com or by phoning 800-355-7073, or 520-836-9790.



one does not know if he will remain faithful and endure future tests. In this paradigm as well, the significance of the new birth and the Spirit’s confirmation that we are children of God (Rom. 8:14-17) is missing.

The North Wind

There are yet others who promote the simple gospel. Using John 5:24 and other such passages, they teach that once a person has “believed” that Jesus is the Christ they have eternal life and can never be lost because they will not come into judgment. Believers who appear to fall away are still saved, even if there is little or no noticeable evidence. A one-time profession of “belief” is all that is necessary. Obedience, they teach, simply adds to the rewards of discipleship here as well as future rewards in heaven. The problem with the North Wind is that it equates salvation with a statement of belief without stressing the need to trust and receive a new birth. This paradigm may give assurance to people who may not have been born again by the Holy Spirit.

The Road Ahead

So where is our assurance based? It is based in Christ. “He who has the Son has the life” (1 Jn. 5:12). If we really believe and trust that Jesus is the Christ, died for our sins, and rose from the grave, we have life assurance now and forever because we have the guarantee of the Holy Spirit testifying to our spirits (Eph. 2:13-14; Rom. 8:14-17). Further, if we are truly born-again there will be a change in our lives. If we focus on what the New Testament teaches regarding being “in Christ”, there will be more evidence of faith in our lives than if we focus on our own obedience. “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son... These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:11, 13). †

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

LIZ CHURCH

Healed from my sin

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My story is similar to that of the blind man whose story is recorded in Mark 8:22-26. Jesus healed him in “stages,” first giving him partial sight so that men looked like trees walking, and then He gave the man clear vision. Like the blind man, I did not see clearly at first, but as Jesus continued to heal me, my spiritual vision, like the blind man’s, has moved from seeing fuzzy glimpses of truth to seeing clearly.

By the grace of God I was born in a Seventh-day Adventist Hospital to third generation Adventist parents. My parents are consistent church members, educated in Adventist colleges and loyal to the “truth”.

I was educated in Adventist schools from first grade through college. I was baptized into the Adventist church at age 11 following a grade school baptismal class. I loved being involved in

Pathfinders, summer camp, and other church activities; I went Ingathering, and I knew my memory verses and Sabbath School lessons. I read *The Bible Stories* and *Bedtime Stories* by “Uncle Arthur” Maxwell. When I graduated from eighth grade, I received the *Conflict Of the Ages* series by Ellen White, which I reverently read. I was loyal and accepted my Adventist uniqueness as normal, and I was quite matter-of-fact in defending my Adventist differences to the curious.

Then, somewhere in the midst of all my loyal Adventist immersion, something changed. I became a teenager who could be best characterized as angry, rebellious, sullen, and disrespectful. The principal and others in my grade school prayed over me in an attempt to exorcise my anger and rebellious nature. Their intervention didn’t work, and with my parents and teachers at their wits’ ends, I was sent to an Adventist boarding school.

Today I would have probably been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD), but in our small, very conservative school, I was diagnosed as being devil-possessed. I was a major headache

to my teachers who tried with restraint and most likely deference to my parents to deal gently with me.

During my academy years I was sensitive to spiritual things, and this sensitivity led me to write a paper in Bible doctrines class on justification by faith. My memory tells me I received a failing grade from a fundamentalist Adventist teacher, although I remember trying very hard to prove my points from E. G. White's writings and feeling that there was something I wasn't quite understanding. Now I know that the Holy Spirit was at work.

Shame was a major controlling emotion in my life. I couldn't measure up to the good kids; I couldn't sit still to study, and I was constantly on the edge between failure and success. I managed to get into college but was unable to succeed. Then I became a student missionary—and I found out I loved to travel.

The next year I married a third-generation Adventist who became a seminary student during the early 80's. Those were years of dizzying revelations within Adventism: Des Ford proving the investigative judgment was unscriptural at Glacier View, Walter Rea and his book *The White Lie* in which he exposed Ellen White's plagiarism, Jeffrey Paxton's *The Shaking of Adventism*, and finally the Dallas Statement of Fundamental Beliefs (FBs) which cemented Ellen White as a "continuing and authoritative source of truth" (FB #18). My aspiring pastor-husband refused to sign the statement, and I agreed with him.

I could have very easily ended any relationship with Adventism at that time. I questioned EGW and everything else just on general principle out of rebellion and found myself in the very strange position of being a cultural Adventist for the sake of...what? That was the question I couldn't answer.

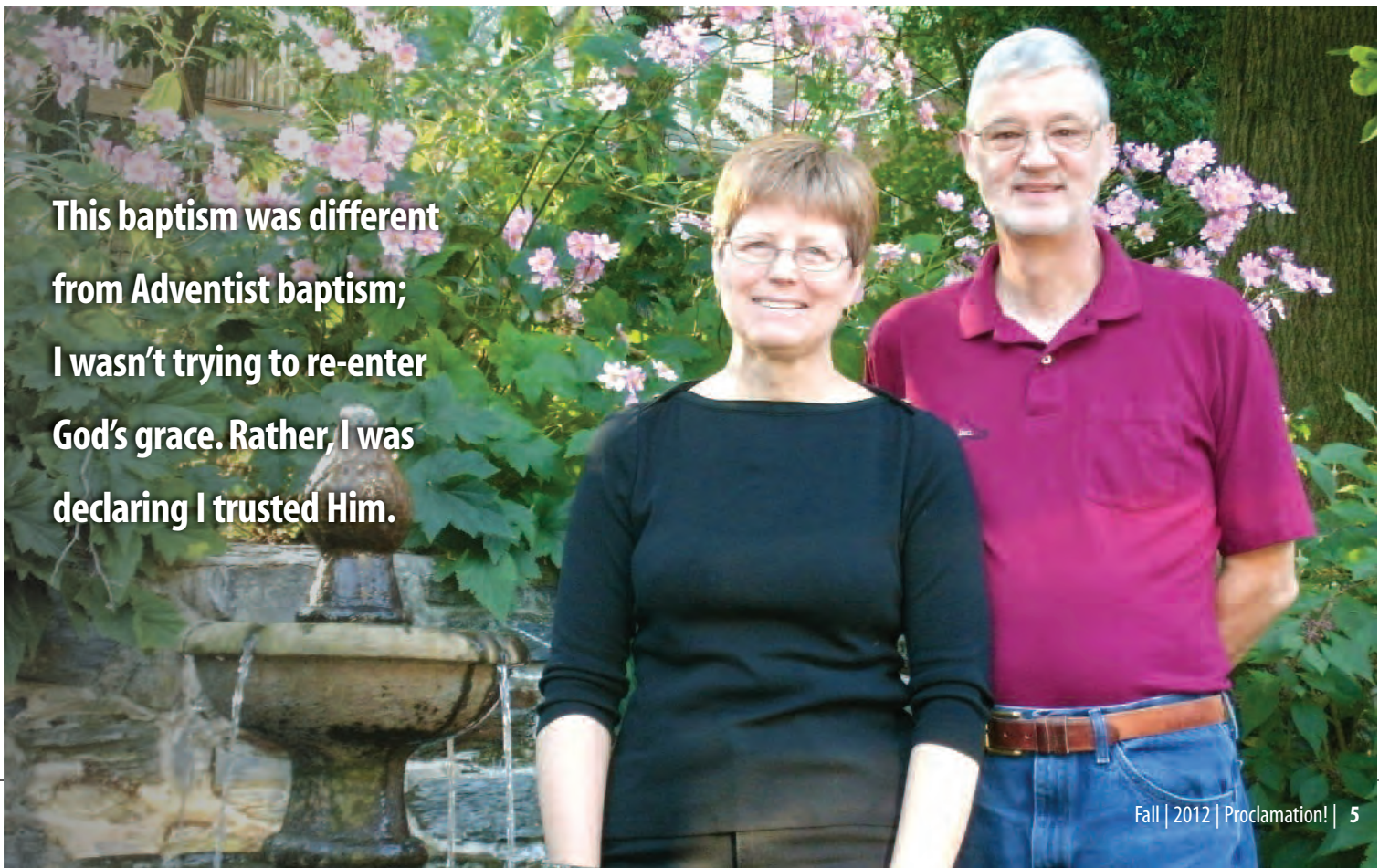
Disintegrating life

During our non-pastoring years, I finished my bachelor of science degree in nursing and had two children. In the midst of life's busyness, an acquaintance spent some time explaining the concept of Sabbath rest in Christ, and it was intriguing to me. Again I was nudged by the Holy Spirit to see.

My husband and I ended up in the safety net of pastoring. We moved to another conference away from family and familiarity and then took three successive positions in the mission field. Consequently, for over ten years I was away from mainstream Adventism, raising my three children in foreign countries and feeling very much alone. Our life was not what it seemed to be on the surface, and finally, tired of the hypocrisy in which I was living, I opted to leave my family. It is a heart-breaking and gut wrenching story that ended in divorce and separation from my children. When the Adventist church officials caught up with me, I was called on the telephone and told to write a letter to have my name removed from the membership books. I couldn't even remember at which church I had last had my name on the membership list.

I wrote my letter asking to have my name removed, and as I think back, I realize that I didn't feel anything—no sense of loss, nostalgia, or remorse. I was continuing to attend the Adventist church because I was living with my mother, but I felt no desire to rejoin the church.

I had by this time met a Christian man at work who kept talking to me about religion and asking me questions: was I reading my Bible? Had I read *Pilgrims' Progress*? He gave me *The Secret of the Vine* and encouraged me to read it. I was slowly being introduced to



This baptism was different from Adventist baptism; I wasn't trying to re-enter God's grace. Rather, I was declaring I trusted Him.

Christian literature and biblical thinking at the same time I continued attending my mother's church.

About a year after I removed my name from the books, the Adventist pastor asked me if I wanted to be re-baptized. I said, "No." I told him that I didn't believe in the Adventist concept of continually being re-baptized. Someone I knew had been baptized eight times, and I thought it was ridiculous. When I thought about the Adventist belief that re-baptism symbolized a return to God's grace, I would picture the story in John 8 where Jesus said to the woman caught in sin, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on, sin no more."

Meanwhile I was trying to convince Ernie, the Christian man I had met at work, about the Sabbath and the state of the dead, but he was doing his homework. He found out things about Adventism that I had never heard before, and then he started using the "cult" word. Well, I had an answer for that; Walter Martin's *Kingdom of the Cults* lets Adventism off the hook.

Healing

Meanwhile, God, who is in the business of healing us and who never stops half-way, gave me love for Ernie that led to our marriage in 2006. With my marriage to Ernie came a restoration of my relationships with my sons and release from Adventism that has been amazing in its intricacy.

Ernie was attending the church in which we were married (non-Adventist, of course). I was attending periodically but was always looking over my shoulder—waiting for lightning to strike, I suppose. Eventually we began attending the Sunday evening small group, and I began to notice the teaching. We were hearing just the Bible with no extra-biblical sources to confirm or explain it. I began to listen carefully and found I could believe what I was hearing.

In November, 2006, Life Assurance Ministries sent out a very large mailing to Adventist leaders, professionals, and other members, and the *Proclamation!* intended for my father ended up at my address on the same day we were leaving for a weekend visit with friends. During our three-hour drive, I read and re-read every word of that journal. I was intent and amazed at what I was reading.

Ernie says that I kept repeating comments including, "I can't believe it. I was taught so many lies!" and "Adventists teach a different gospel!" Many Adventist supporting pillars



fell that day, but the Sabbath and soul sleep doctrines were very deeply ingrained.

I remember going online and printing out every previous issue of *Proclamation!*. I was starved, and I devoured most of every issue before I was sated. Then I started reading the books, Dale Ratzlaff's *Cultic Doctrine of*

Seventh-day Adventists, Sabbath in Christ, and all the others. I would like to say thank you to everyone involved in this ministry for your obedience to the working of the Holy Spirit in your lives.

One Sunday after I received the *Proclamation!* magazine, we were asked to host the visiting minister and his wife for lunch at our home. Imagine my surprise when I told him I had been raised an Adventist, and he told me he had done his master's thesis on Adventism. I received a one hour lecture/sermon on the errors of Adventism as compared with Scripture. I had a sense of what the Ethiopian eunuch felt when Philip showed up (Acts 8:25-40).

In April, 2011, I was fired from my job and came home to tell Ernie. He had been listening to some Former Adventist Fellowship weekend audios, and needing distraction, I sat down to listen also. Within about five minutes, I heard Mark Martin say that if I hadn't been baptized into Christ, I needed to do it. Without my even being aware of the sanctification being done in me, I realized that I could be obedient. This baptism was different from Adventist baptism; I wasn't trying to re-enter God's grace. Rather, I was declaring I trusted Him. God seems to get my attention in rather dramatic ways, and then, when Jesus calls me "Daughter" as He called the woman who touched His hem (Mk. 5:34), I know that my shame is healed, and I can go in peace.

In July, 2011, I was baptized into Christ, raised to walk in newness of life—and not into any specific church. What a concept! I am attending the church in which I was baptized; it is a Bible-believing and teaching church. Baptism solidified in my heart that Jesus has redeemed my life, and I have put my trust in His finished work for my salvation.

I have been at home for over a year. I'm able to spend more time with my mother now, and God is using this time to teach me to wait on Him. I have found a Bible Study Fellowship class, and I continue to search for and read recommended books. I can truly say that Jesus has fully healed my blindness at last. I no longer see partially, as if men are trees walking, but I see with the clarity that comes through knowledge that I am redeemed and saved forever with Christ. I look through eyes that see—and my gaze is filled with Jesus. †



Liz Church graduated from Andrews University in 1986 with a Bachelors degree in nursing. She also graduated from Millersville State University in 2009 with a Masters degree and is a CRNP. Liz has three adult sons from her first marriage and is currently married to Ernie. Liz and Ernie attend Fleetwood Bible Church in Fleetwood, PA. Liz enjoys gardening, cross-stitch, and reading the writings of biblicists. Liz is shown here giving her testimony at the Former Adventist Fellowship Conference last February in Redlands, California.

Fundamental Belief #3. Father:

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father.

There are serious errors in the Seventh-day Adventist theology of the Trinity (as discussed in the last edition of *Proclamation!*), that result in Adventism's theology about God being erroneous even though their words about God sound orthodox. However, their Fundamental Belief statement about the Father contains nothing overt that differs from the vast majority of Christian teachings on the subject. Moreover, I have not found any additional statements by Adventist theologians indicating that the terms used in the Fundamental Belief statement have unique definitions within Seventh-day Adventism.

The concern that I have about Seventh-day Adventist doctrine regarding the Father derives from a teaching that is not discussed within this belief statement. Within Adventist theology there is an insistence that the Father is a material being with a physical body and even a physical location. For example, Jerry Moon from the Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University makes the following observations:¹

“For example, one Trinitarian (sic) creed that early Adventists quoted fairly often was that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Ellen White's church of origin. That creed says in part, ‘There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts.’ This the early Adventists vigorously refuted, citing several biblical passages that portrayed God as having both ‘body’ and ‘parts’.

“Ellen White was also much interested in this question. Twice in early visions of Jesus, she asked Him questions related to the ‘form’ and ‘person’ of God. In one early vision, she reported seeing ‘a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus’ countenance,’ she said, ‘and admired His lovely person. The Father’s person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist”” (*Early Writings*, p. 54).

Scripture is clear that God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24). The Christian church has long distinguished between the physical and spiritual, and this distinction is warranted based on the words of Jesus that

ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #3

**THE FATHER:
SPIRIT OR BODY**

Ellen White expressed a very different nature of God as presented in her visions, and as a result, Adventism teaches that God has a “personal form” reflected in man’s physical body.

spirits do not have flesh and bones (Lk. 24:29) along with multiple descriptions of God as invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jn. 1:18). Seventh-day Adventists emphasize the verses which speak of physical attributes of God as proof that He is a material being (Isa. 59:1; 2 Chron. 16:9; and Matt. 4:4). Christians have generally understood these attributes as anthropomorphisms or symbols to make God more understandable to us. However, Ellen White expressed a very different nature of God as presented in her visions, and as a result, Adventism teaches that God has a “personal form” reflected in man’s physical body.² Notice that this statement from Seventh-day Adventists Believe mirrors Ellen White's thinking:

“No sinful human being has ever seen God (Ex. 33:20). We have no photograph of His features.”³

The Adventist teaching is not that God is spirit and has no physical features, or that God is invisible. Rather, Adventist belief has to be pulled into line with Ellen White's vision that God has a physical form and features that cannot be safely viewed by sinful man.

In summary, Seventh-day Adventism holds that the verses mentioning physical attributes of God indicate that He has a physical body. Concurrently, they do not insist on a literal interpretation of all verses regarding God's attributes, nor do they provide any real way to reconcile the verses that say that God is invisible. In contrast, mainstream Christianity includes all of the Biblical passages on the subject with an explanation that reconciles the apparent differences. †

¹ Moon, J. (2006) “The Quest for a Biblical Trinity: Ellen White's ‘Heavenly Trio’ Compared to the Traditional Doctrine”. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17,1, 140-159. http://www.atsjats.org/publication_file.php?pub_id=241&journal=1&type=pdf

² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2008, ed., Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., p. 98.

³ <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-03.htm>

Rick Barker is a native of Southwestern Ohio and facilitates a weekly Bible study for former and transitioning Adventists in the Dayton, Ohio, area. Rick graduated from Andrews University in 1987 and received a Masters degree from the University of Dayton. Rick and his wife Sheryl formally left the Adventist church in 2004. Prior to this they had been active in the Miamisburg and Wilmington, Ohio, churches. They currently attend Living Waters Lutheran Church in Springboro.



MARTIN L. CAREY

A young man with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt and blue jeans, is walking away from the camera. He has a large black backpack on his back. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**WILL
YOU
SEND
YOUR
OLDEST
SON
AWAY?**

(AND HIS MOTHER, TOO)

“Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me, because of you.” Sarai wryly remembered her husband Abram’s words as she stood watching the single file of Egyptian slaves walking past. Abram had made her tell this cowardly half-lie to protect him against powerful men who might otherwise kill him because of their desire for her. Sarai was, indeed, Abram’s half-sister, but more importantly, she was his beautiful wife. Because of their lie, an unsuspecting Pharaoh arrived to give Abram—not a death blow, but a generous dowry of servants and livestock in exchange for her (Gen. 12:16). She stepped into Pharaoh’s waiting litter and sighed, “You have been blessed, Abram, because of me, but our lie didn’t protect me from the harem.”

Abram failed to protect his wife, and Pharaoh wanted Sarai for himself—but God saw Sarai’s plight and rained horrific plagues on Pharaoh and his household (12:17). Pharaoh soon discovered the mistake in taking Sarai, a married woman, and rightly rebuked Abram for his lack of honor. The monarch lost no time in returning Sarai and firmly escorting Abram’s entire caravan out of Egypt to the desert where they began trudging back to drought-ravaged Canaan. In spite of Abram’s weakness and her own brush with danger, Sarai knew God had been good to them. They were returning to Canaan with an Egyptian fortune. Nevertheless, even this kingliest of gifts could never soothe the deepest ache in her heart—the longing to hold a child of her own.

Among Sarai’s new servants was an Egyptian girl who had apparently served in Pharaoh’s palace. And as a royal gift to Abram, she was likely very bright and attractive. We don’t know her original Egyptian name; we only know that her new owners called her “Hagar,” Hebrew for “Wanderer.” Serving Abram’s nomadic family, although they were wealthy, was a step down for a young woman who had served a king. Nevertheless, Hagar was eager to please and proved herself trustworthy so that Sarai appointed her as personal maid. This appointment was a position of honor, and Hagar served her mistress well for a time.

In her culture, slaves were considered the personal property of their owners, and usually slaves retained that status for life.¹ Their children were also legally slaves, unless they could purchase their freedom. Occasionally, however, Egyptian slaves were allowed to own property, and some even married into their masters’ families. These privileged Egyptian slaves contrasted with other slaves throughout history who had little chance of advancement and were considered naturally inferior.² In short, Hagar knew she had no hope of changing her status. She was destined to live out her life as a personal slave in a wealthy nomadic family.

Ten years passed after the Egypt incident, and Abram and Sarai remained childless. Though her father had named her “Princess,” Sarai could not live up to his hopes, nor to Abram’s. She said to Abram, “Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her” (Gen. 16:2). God had earlier promised them a son (Gen. 15:3-6), but she saw her barrenness as God’s excluding her from the promise. Now she wanted to do her part to make the promise come true. Hagar could “build up” the family as a surrogate mother.

Surrogacy was an accepted practice in those times for wealthy families with no heir. Sometimes they chose trusted servants to be their heirs,³ as Abram had chosen Eliezer (Gen. 15:2). In this case, Sarai esteemed Hagar, so she gave her servant to Abram as the second wife, and he agreed (16:3).

“And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, ‘May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!’” (Gen. 16:4, 5).

There was deep hurt in Sarai’s words. Abram had failed to protect her honor from Pharaoh and from years of shame. Now Hagar’s scorn added insult to the injury of being childless, and where was the justice in that?

Hagar was the new object of Abram’s affections, and she felt exalted over Sarai as the wife who had “built up” Abram. The child was legally Sarai’s, but who could not see who was the more blessed wife? The temptation of pride overcame this slave girl, and disdain for her mistress began to show. Sarai blamed Abram since his intimacy with Hagar had elevated her status. She had a grievance, and the law was on her side. Hammurabi’s Code stated that if a concubine acted as an equal to the first wife, she could be demoted back to slave status.⁴

Who could possibly know her Hebrew name in this remote place? Then she saw Him, and she knew this was no man, but Someone of terrifying, wonderful majesty. He drew near to her, and she fell to the ground.

This was an opportunity for Abram to lead his household with proper boundaries and loving reassurances. Instead of restoring peace, however, his passivity heightened the crisis. Abram withdrew himself from helping the battling women, so he said, “Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please” (vs. 6). It was true; Sarai had charge over the female slaves including Hagar. Wounded Sarai was determined to put the upstart in her place, and she used Abram’s authority to “bow her down” with humiliating treatment.

“Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her” (vs. 7).

Sarai’s wrath was intolerable for proud Hagar, and she quickly made her decision. She threw together a few necessities, and under cover of darkness, she fled into the desert.

The Messenger

The desert was vast, and Hagar was ill-prepared for such a long journey, but her anger was still hot. She kept pressing on through the night, walking for hours under the stars, and she began to examine her life.

I wish I had never left Egypt to live in this god-forsaken desert. I belong with my own people so my child can be Egyptian, like me!

It felt so good to be free! Sarai couldn’t find her—in fact, no one could. She had to admit to herself, though, that this wilderness was dangerous for her, a lone, pregnant woman. There were hidden things that could leap out and bite her. She could fall down a cliff, or into the hands of evil men. Nevertheless, pride and rage drove her over hills and through valleys, heading southwest. Her water and food would soon run out, she knew, but she remembered a little spring on the way to Shur. As the sun rose, she searched the rocky hills for any hopeful sign, but the empty brown landscape seemed to go on forever. Several days later she tipped back the water skin and drank the last drops. Weary and stumbling—despairing—she suddenly saw the familiar cluster of green bushes that encircled the elusive pool. Now she could be refreshed for the rest of her journey! After a long drink, her thoughts drifted off again to her homeland.

Where are the gods of my people? Where is Horus, with his all-seeing eye, to see me and protect me? Can he help me all the way out here?

Hagar was alone, but she was happy to have fled Sarai’s oppression—with her strange God who whispered in the dark to the old man. What grand promises He had made! And then her thoughts returned to her fading hope of reaching Egypt. If she ever got there—if she found her former taskmasters and begged for mercy, would they take her back, a runaway slave? Her own family was too poor to help her, if they were still alive. And what would happen to her baby?

Pharaoh traded me away like a sheep for that woman; I don’t belong to him anymore. In fact, no one wants me; I have no people.

She sat by the pool with her doubts while a hot desert wind blew sand into her eyes and mouth. She had never felt more utterly lost and alone.

I am no one; I am invisible, and I may as well be dead.

“Hagar!” The voice was a gentle, kind voice, but with ground-shaking power. Frightened, she looked about, and saw no man. Who could possibly know her Hebrew name in this remote place? Then she saw Him, and she knew this was no man, but Someone of terrifying, wonderful majesty. He drew near to her, and she fell to the ground.

“Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” (vs. 8) He had found her! It was no use lying to Him. “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.”

He was the “Angel of the Lord,” *ma’lakh Yabweb*, and the Messenger of the Covenant. He appeared as the protector of His people in their darkest hour. His voice had called Abram out of Ur, and long ago He had called the galaxies into existence by the word of His power. Now He had words for His angry slave girl. “Return to your mistress and submit to her” (vs. 9).

Submit? Do I have to return to that jealous woman?

Of all the things Hagar most dreaded, returning and submitting to Sarai topped the list. But that wasn’t all. He said, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude” (vs. 10).

Multiply offspring...multitude? This must be Abram’s God, that is his talk.

Then He said, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael (God Hears), because the Lord has listened to your affliction” (vs. 11).

He hears! Surely He knows all my sorrows.

He also said to her, “He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen” (vs. 12).

Hagar understood the donkey imagery. She had grown up with the onager, the wild ass of the desert that no man could tame. God spoke of His donkey to Job:

“Who has let the wild donkey go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I have given the arid plain for his home and the salt land for his dwelling place? He scorns the tumult of the city; he hears not the shouts of the driver” (Job 39:5-7).

For His sovereign purposes, God determined that Ishmael would live as an unruly man in perpetual conflict, “dwelling over against all his brethren.” Ishmael’s nation, although destined for greatness (Gen. 17:20; 21:18), was also destined to exist in perpetual conflict, especially with his brothers. This was their divinely appointed role in history.⁵

With that, He vanished. Hagar was overcome with delight and wonder at the One she had just seen. “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me” (vs. 13). She looked up again to the dry hills and saw them with new eyes. This place of death had been transformed into a place of glory. He had followed her here! He was watching over her right now. She suddenly realized:

That was Abram’s God! This place belongs to Him, every stone, every snake and scorpion. I belong to Him too! She named the place, *Beer-labai-roi*, “Well of the Living One Who Sees Me.”⁶

Did Hagar belong to the true God? While we cannot make a final judgment, consider that the Lord heard her affliction and pursued her into the wilderness. He met this troubled woman at the well and knew everything she had ever done (Jn. 4:39). He satisfied her thirst. When He sent her back to submit to her enemy, she obeyed because she believed His promises. He knew His lost sheep; she heard His voice, and she followed Him (Jn. 10:27). “Is He not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also” (Rom. 3:29).

Hagar got up, filled her water bottle, and turned her back on Egypt. The long, rocky road back to Abram’s tents didn’t seem so treacherous, for she was not alone. She carried His words and little Ishmael with a great future. Inevitably, the dreaded moment arrived when she stood before Sarai, but she remembered His words, and she submitted. She also told Abram and Sarai her story. She had met the God Who Sees, and He had named her baby Ishmael, “God Hears.” They believed her, and when the baby was born, Ishmael he was. Thereafter, whenever Abram and Sarai heard Ishmael’s name called, they were reminded that God heard their affliction, too.

As For Sarai Your Wife

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless...” (Gen. 17:1).

These commands to Abraham were not conditioned on his perfection; rather they were Abraham’s promised responses to God’s faithfulness. Genesis 17 recounts how God renewed His covenant with Abram to bless and multiply his offspring, and He changed his name to Abraham. God also commanded him to circumcise all the males of his household, and Abraham obeyed that same day. Then God said,

“As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her” (Gen. 17:15).

All along, even when she had felt shamed and forgotten, God had kept anxious Sarah in His plans as His “princess,” for she was blessed as Abram’s true wife. Because she had been barren, giving birth would glorify God all the more. When God spoke these words, Abraham fell on his face and laughed with amazement. Ninety-year-old Sarah heard his laughter from behind the tent door, and she also laughed quietly to herself. The Lord asked, “Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord?” She denied laughing, but He said, “No, but you did laugh” (Gen. 18:15) Sarah forgot; God hears.

“The Lord visited Sarah as he had said...and Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him” (Gen. 21:1, 2).

Sarah held baby Isaac in her aging, tired arms, and laughed out loud, saying, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.” And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

The baby grew. “And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing.” Isaac was between two and three years old, while Ishmael was about 16. The original language indicates that the laughing was continuous behavior,⁷ and in Galatians 4, Paul interprets the “laughing” as mocking Isaac. Sarah saw her opportunity and went to Abraham saying,

“Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac” (Gen. 21:10).

Abraham was horrified, for Ishmael was his precious firstborn, and Hagar was close to his heart. “But God said to Abraham, ‘Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring’” (Gen. 21:12, 13).

Although Sarah was moved by jealousy to expel Hagar and her son, nevertheless the inheritance could not be shared. Furthermore, God supported Sarah, reassuring Abraham of His promises regarding Ishmael. Significantly, God did not call Hagar “wife,” but “your slave woman.” Hagar could never be Abraham’s true wife because Sarah was his original bride. Moreover, Ishmael was the child of human devising. God’s words were awful to bear, but Abraham obeyed.

Abraham got up early the next morning and gave Hagar and Ishmael provisions for their desert journey. They must have tearfully rehearsed the promises that God had made for Ishmael, trust-

Hagar could never be Abraham's true wife because Sarah was his original bride. Moreover, Ishmael was the child of human devising. God's words were awful to bear, but Abraham obeyed.

ing that He would care for His own. For all his wealth and power, Abraham's promises to them had all come to nothing, and there were few words to say for such a painful parting. The sun would soon be hot, and they had to go.

Mother and teenaged son began walking south, but not towards Egypt. They entered the Beersheba wilderness where their carefully rationed water would last only a few days. They had to keep moving, searching for any sign of water, but they found none. They walked until teenaged Ishmael became so weak he kept falling down. He was too big for her to carry, and in her exhaustion, she finally "threw" him under the shade of a desert bush. She could no longer help him; the water was gone, and they were near the end. Hagar walked a few hundred feet away and sat down, facing the other way. She couldn't bear to hear his cries and said aloud, "Let me not see the child die" (Gen. 21:16). Then she lifted up her voice, and wept.

Out of the blazing sky came the Voice: "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation" (Gen. 21:17, 18). The Messenger of Abram's Covenant was still watching Hagar as He had promised years before. Now, when she looked across the sand, He opened her eyes to see a hidden well. God had carefully guided them to that very spot. Water! She filled her skin and ran over to pale, gasping Ishmael and pressed the water to his lips.

"And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt" (Gen. 21:19-21).

As a child of unbelief, Ishmael would develop a fierce, independent spirit. He married the Egyptian wife his mother fetched for him, and she bore him 12 sons who established themselves in the Sinai desert as a restless culture of warring tribes (Gen. 25:12-18). It was never God's design for Hagar and Ishmael to coexist with Sarah and Isaac in Abraham's tents. By sovereign design Hagar's expulsion fit in with God's promise to Abraham that through Isaac all the world would be blessed through his Seed. Now through that promised Seed, Hagar's and Ishmael's descendants as well as all the rest of us Gentiles can be adopted into Abraham's family.

God expanded Ishmael's nation as promised, but throughout their history the Ishmaelites were idolatrous. Hagar's Arabian descendants adopted many deities, including Hubal and the goddess Al-Lat. The massive agate statue of Hubal, the lunar Lord of the Ka'bah, stood in Mecca where animal and child sacrifices were offered to him.⁸ By the time of Paul, Ishmael's descendants' polytheism was well established. Ironically, in 630 AD, Mohammed purged Mecca of its 360 idols to make a holy place for Allah.⁹ By the sword of Mohammed, Islam violently conquered Hagar's sons, and of all religions, none demonstrated the lash of religious law more sharply than Islam's Sharia law. As Salman Rushdie, a modern fugitive from Islam said,

in that religion there are "rules for every damn thing."¹⁰ In spite of its assault on polytheism, however, Islam's religious law has not delivered Ishmael's descendants from their wild and warring ways. In spite of Islam's monotheism, we see in it the evidence that of all humanity's dark impulses, none is more dangerous than religiosity separated from the God of Abraham.

The Ishmaelites, however, living in Arabia in the Sinai desert, were not alone in their pattern of bondage. To the north, their Jewish brothers in Jerusalem also labored in bondage under Sinai's long shadow.

Listening to the Law

The Galatian Christians had been liberated from their idolatry by the gospel but had become discontented. Although they had abandoned their pagan idols for faith in Christ and were adopted as sons and had received the Holy Spirit and experienced His power, they wanted more. They coveted Jewish blessings which they were told would come with keeping the law. If God awarded greater kindnesses to sons of the law, as the Judaizers suggested, then Sinai would be their covenant, too. So Paul asked them,

"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?" (Gal. 4:21).

Then he showed them from the Torah that living under the law and worshipping idols were both varieties of slavery (Gal. 4:9).

"For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants" (Gal. 4:21-24).

Abram and Sarai had contrived to fulfill God's promises by natural means. Their scheme produced a child of human effort and will, so he was born of nature instead of faith. In reality, the marriage of Abram to his slave was prompted by a loss of confidence in God, so Ishmael was misbegotten into slavery. In contrast, Isaac's birth was a miracle through faith, not through his parents' working or conniving, and he lived by trusting God's promises.¹¹ As a child of nature, Ishmael was "a wild donkey of a man," resisting authority and fighting for survival. Thus the two covenants

represented by Hagar and Sarah's sons contrast living by faith in God's promises vs. trusting in self (See table 1).

"One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar" (vs. 24b). Just as Ishmael and Isaac could not coexist in one tent, so law and grace are two covenantal systems that produce opposite results. Slavery and freedom cannot live together in one system (See table 2).

The law was not everlasting but was given as a temporary measure for Israel (Gal. 3:17). Now that faith has come, the first covenant of law has been outlawed (Gal. 3:25). Placing ourselves under the shadow of Sinai's law, instead of under the authority of the One who fulfilled the law, contrives an illegitimate religion that only gives birth to lawlessness.

In the house of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael's purpose was to serve their masters. Yet in spite of their service and even in spite of Ishmael's biological connection to Abraham, Ishmael hoped in vain for his father's inheritance. Likewise, law is the slave of grace; the two will be in conflict, for law has no part in grace's inheritance. Therefore, the two covenants of law and grace cannot live in the same house.

"Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children" (vs. 25).

Mt. Sinai and its laws are in Arabia, outside the land of promise, and that is where the sons of Ishmael have lived since the days of Hagar. Paul understood that once the new covenant of grace was inaugurated by the blood of Jesus, his Jewish brothers in Jerusalem were also in bondage, refusing to believe in Jesus as the reality that fulfilled the law's requirements and insisting on still keeping the law to earn Abraham's inheritance. In other words, Hagar's slavery to the works of human flesh corresponds to Jerusalem's slavery to physical servitude under the law. The Judaizers who sought righteousness through adding the law to the gospel were reenacting the envious, slavish resentments of both Ishmael and Jerusalem.¹² In this metaphor, Paul says both the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac insisted on staying in control through their own acts of the flesh. Neither was willing to trust God alone.

As long as he remains in the house, Ishmael will mock Isaac. Hagar and Ishmael must be cast out.

"But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman'" (vs. 29, 30).

TABLE 1

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL	SARAH AND ISAAC
• Carnal wife	Free, true wife
• Ishmael: Slave son	Isaac: Free son
• Born first, but not heir	Heir, though born after
• No share of the inheritance	All of the inheritance
• Child of the flesh and nature	Child of faith and promise

TABLE 2

OLD COVENANT (SINAI)	NEW COVENANT (PROMISE)
• Covenant of Law	Covenant of Promise
• Provisional, given 430 years after covenant w/ Abraham (Gal. 3:17a)	Eternal, original covenant, never voided by Sinai (Gal. 3:17b)
• Children born of flesh (Gal. 4:22)	Children born of God (Jn. 1:13)
• Enslaves its children	Births free children
• No inheritance	Inherits all things
• Temporary until Seed should come	Eternal promise fulfilled by Seed

Spirit of Slavery vs. Spirit of Adoption

We have two world views from which to choose. Under the first, we devise a system to earn our spiritual inheritance. We attempt to please God or natural forces by pursuing rules of good living. Alternatively, we see the majesty of God's grace; we despair of our own slavish virtue, and we accept the gospel of Christ's finished work. When we believe in the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection for us, we are reborn, not by our willing or working, but of God as new creatures (Jn. 1:13).

Of course, that sounds terribly impractical—and it is. The gospel does not begin with practical advice, but with a radical disruption of our proud, slavish lifestyle. Jesus said, "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever" (Jn. 8:34, 35). The lawful slave is never secure as a member of his master's household and always lives under threat of being cast out. Slaves are human commodities who must continually prove their worth to earn their blessings. The shrewd slave "knows his place":

When we believe in the Lord Jesus, His life and death are ours; we are freed. We are miraculously born of God, and like Isaac, we are children of promise. From that moment we are secure forever as permanent members of His household.

he never attains his dreams but struggles to get what it seems should be his. As humans, we naturally serve the ruler of this world, and we love our rebellious, grasping ways. As natural slaves in the domain of darkness (Col. 1:13), we haven't just broken some rules; we have committed treason against our Creator, the sovereign God over all. Until we believe in the Lord Jesus, we are slave children like Ishmael.

In contrast, the adopted sons know that they are adopted through their Father's grace. Their value is not tied to their performance, measured in units of labor, but is established by a single "unit" of Christ's obedience unto death. Moreover, just as natural slaves know their place to be continual subservience, the sons of God know their place too: "in Christ," having His life, forever. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, His life and death are ours; we are freed. We are miraculously born of God, and like Isaac, we are children of promise. From that moment we are secure forever as permanent members of His household. We are never cast out (Jn. 6:37), for when the Son sets us free, we are free indeed (Jn. 8:36).

In Luke 15, Jesus also contrasted two sons. The younger son was wayward but accepted by grace, while the older son was proudly resentful like an obedient slave. He appeared obedient on the outside, but in his spirit, he resented his father as the commandment-giver (vs. 29). As Ishmael had undoubtedly felt, the older son in the parable felt entitled to the inheritance, and he resented his father for never giving him even a goat. The father replied, "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours!" But the older son didn't want his father's grace; he believed his labor proved his worth, and he wanted his wages.¹³ In contrast, the children of grace are like the younger son who returns to the Father's house and abides there by grace alone. When the Father's grace makes us sons at heart, we obey Him from the heart and no longer work for wages.

The Oldness of the Letter

Teaching our children morality requires clear, specific rules. For them, virtue must be broken down into the smallest units of behavior, just as kindergartners learn to read one letter at a time.

In Galatians 4:3, Paul calls these moral details *stoicheia*, or "elemental principles," rules for little children. We begin children's morality lessons simply with, "No hitting or kicking!" and then, "No biting or pinching!" and so on. According to Paul, Christians who want to live under the law are under basic prohibitions as are toddlers and slaves. When we become fully sons, Paul said, we are no longer under such "weak and worthless elementary principles." Such a way of life does not produce righteousness, but infantile, slavish compliance, "the old way of the written code" (Rom. 7:6).

We know that the law (which is not defined by the 10 Commandments but is, rather, the entire Torah) is good when used lawfully and was laid down for the lawless and

unholy (1 Tim. 1:8,9). Many people, however, do not understand that the Ten Commandments elegantly reduce the 603 other commandments in the Torah into a succinct summary. In other words, the Ten Commandments were never intended to be a stand-alone document.

The law-keeper, however, believes that the Ten Commandments are his only trustworthy restraint against sin. He reasons that because good laws foster peaceful relationships and a civil society, his fleshly nature will be suppressed by scrupulous law-keeping. Sons of the law, which they define as the Ten Commandments, disdain others who don't live under the law as irresponsible and unholy. For them, obedience is imitating Jesus, their supreme example of righteousness-by-law, rather than their Substitute.

Laws restrain behavior, but they cannot restrain desires (Col. 2:20-23). They only excite our worst passions (Rom. 7:8). Our sinful natures use the law to stir up our natural rebellion to more willful sins (Rom. 7:7). Instead of the law producing righteousness, therefore, our flesh perverts the law into an instruction manual for more civil, respectable sins. The Pharisees paraded their legally correct behaviors to exalt themselves. Similarly we observe the laws we like and avoid those "least commandments" (Matt. 5:19) that we don't respect. When we use our own "Sinai-Lite" to scratch our religious itch, we show our contempt for the entire law (Jas. 2:10). Consequently, placing ourselves under any part of Mosaic law obligates us to all of it, and none of us can place ourselves under any part of the law without failing and being cursed (Gal. 3:10). Working for the law only increases our debt:

*You load sixteen tons, what do you get
Another day older and deeper in debt
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go
I owe my soul to the company store.¹⁴*

God brought laws into human history for a specific function, to "increase the trespass" (Rom. 5:20). The law was added because of human transgressions (Gal. 3:19) to drive us in desperation to our knees and to seek Him in repentance. The very law that promised life will only prove death to us (Rom. 7:10). The old written code carved in stone is rightly called the "ministry of death" (2 Cor.

3:7). What was designed to stir up sin in us cannot be used to suppress sin. “The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me” (Rom. 7:10).

The whole law, including its animal sacrifices and ethical commands, are a constant reminder of human weakness and cannot cleanse the conscience (Heb. 10:1-3). The Decalogue can no more make us holy than can shedding the blood of bulls and goats. There is no law that can give life, so righteousness cannot be through the law (Gal. 3:21). Our best law-keeping produces no more life than does killing a sheep, walking to Mecca, or stoning the Devil.

The Newness of the Spirit

Considering all this, we have to ask ourselves, what is the object of our deepest attachment and devotion? To what or whom are we married? Cohabitation with the law is a very bad marriage—so bad, in fact, it is worth dying to escape:

“Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death” (Rom. 7:4,5).

Christians are not married to a thing, even the holiest thing, but to a Person. Like Abraham who tried to help God keep His promise by taking the slave Hagar as a second wife, we naturally try to gain God’s blessings by working hard to please Him. When our best efforts fail to bring the blessings to which we feel entitled, we can learn what to do by looking again at Abraham. He finally believed God and trusted Him to fulfill His original promises through Sarah, and God blessed the entire world. Abraham’s marriage with Hagar was like Sinai’s laws, “weak and useless” (Heb. 7:18-19), and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). But when Abraham and Sarah trusted a living Person who made better promises than their own efforts (Heb. 8:6), they received God’s

promise even though their bodies were “as good as dead” (Rom. 4:19). Likewise, when we turn from our works of the law and the flesh to Him, we are given to the living God. Then our torrid affair with the law, like Abraham’s embrace of Hagar, must end so we can trust Him and give all our devotion to Him. We bear fruit for God after we die to ourselves—and to the law.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). When we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law (vs. 18). Contrary to what many of us were taught, walking in the Spirit does not equal Spirit-powered law-keeping. Instead, walking by the Spirit means we are spiritually alive instead of dead, and we are able to trust God’s promises and submit to them. He works in us both the willing and doing. We don’t die to the law only to marry it again (Rom. 7:4) and revive the deadly law-flesh partnership. Sanctification is by faith in God’s grace alone, from start to finish. No matter how hard things get, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). We are free from the law, not to serve the flesh, but to fulfill it this way: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal. 5:14).

We are either children of the slave woman or children of promise. We are born as indebted slaves by nature—until we believe in the Lord Jesus as the fulfillment of all God’s promises. He adopts us, and we become children of His promise. Our mountain of legal debt was paid in full with blood, once for all. Our law-keeping cannot earn, or keep, what He has promised. Say farewell to hard labor under Sinai’s shadows, and rest on His better promises guaranteed by Jesus’ blood.

Surrender your need to please God and discover what Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar experienced; the God who sees keeps on caring for you. His promises are sure, and He has secured your eternal future through the blood of Jesus. “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman” (Gal. 4:30).

In Christ we are free indeed! †

Endnotes

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⁵ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition on Genesis*, p. 245, linked at PreceptAustin, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xviii.html>

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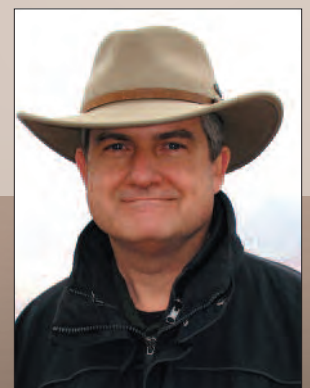
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Martin L. Carey grew up as an Adventist in many different places, including Tacoma Park, Maryland, Missouri, and Guam, USA. During daylight hours he works as a psychologist for a high school in San Bernardino, California. He is also a licensed family therapist. He is married to Sharon and has two sons, Matthew, 10, and Nick, 24. He continues to pine for clear, dark skies with eight different telescopes up to 20". Biblical research and classical piano take up his remaining energy. You may contact him at martincarey@sbcglobal.net.



Walking in the

Sp

CHRIS BADENHORST

Purpose of the Christian life

In order for the Christian life to make sense, we need to understand its purpose and goal. We find this purpose in the Genesis account of our creation where God said: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). In these succinct words we hear God declare that His purpose for man was that we be in His image and likeness.

Contrary to what many of us once believed, the “image” and “likeness” of God are not physical features, because God is not a physical being. John wrote, “No one has ever seen God” (Jn. 1:18), and Jesus declared, “God is spirit” (Jn. 4:24). In other words, God does not have a body like ours. Any biblical references to God as having “ears,” or “arms,” or “eyes” are figurative expressions and are not intended to be understood literally.

Because the divine “image” is not physical, we can conclude that it is moral and spiritual. Being designed in God’s image, therefore, means that man’s character was to portray God’s character in every aspect of his life. In other words, the character of a loving, kind, patient, faithful, gentle, just and long-suffering God would be reflected in the lives of those created in His “image.”

Man Today

Today, however, if we observe the image that man is projecting, and if we did not know any better, what would we conclude about God? We would have to conclude, based on the fact that man was made in His image, that God is proud, thoughtless, careless, greedy, and self-serving; moreover, He is unconcerned about love, respect, honesty, integrity and justice, and He constantly lapses into envy, hatred, arrogance, conceit, selfishness, uncharitableness, and destructiveness.

Why do we see such a distorted projection of God’s character? Why is man, created for such a noble purpose, so debauched? Clearly, something has gone seriously wrong. If we were created to reflect the character of God, we have obviously lost the essential ingredient needed to do so.

The Missing Ingredient

So what is this missing ingredient? What did we lose that makes it impossible for us to fulfill the purpose for which we were

created? It is nothing other than God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit! By the indwelling Holy Spirit we would partake in God’s own life. His presence in us would be the source of our reflection of God’s character. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian believers, diagnoses the condition of man without the Spirit of God. He states: “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from *the life of God*” (Eph. 4:18). This is the missing ingredient—“the life of God”. It is this life by which we are to fulfill His purpose for us: reflecting His image.

Adam’s Original Sin

When Adam disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree it had two serious consequences for him and his descendants. First, humanity died. God had said to Adam: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17). God was not only speaking of physical death, but more importantly, of spiritual death. When Adam sinned, therefore, by eating the forbidden fruit, the Holy Spirit departed from his spirit; he was now void of God—spiritually dead. This death is what Paul describes as “the wages of sin” (Rom. 6:23)—wages that all humanity paid in the Garden of

spirit

Living by the Spirit (NIV) or walking in the Spirit (KJV) defines the way a believer lives his Christian life and grows in his relationship with God after he has been born again. Scripture also uses other phrases to describe this process of spiritual maturing: sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:2), living a new life (Rom. 6:4), perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Cor. 7:1), growing up into Christ (Eph. 4:15), pressing on toward the goal (Phil. 3:14), being strengthened in the faith (Col. 2:7), participating in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and growing in grace (2 Pet. 3:18).

Eden when Adam sinned. Adam died spiritually at that moment, and all of us died in him as well.

The second consequence of Adam's sin was that, as his spirit died, his nature also became sinful. A "law of sin" (Rom. 7:23) entered his body the day God went out. This sin principle is referred to in the Bible as "the flesh" (KJV), "the sinful nature" (NIV), "the depraved mind" (Rom. 1:28), the lusts of the heart (Rom. 1:24), and the body of death (Rom. 7:24). It is an evil bias—a satanic agency which, from the moment Adam ate the fruit, became his master. This "law of sin" from that day on governed Adam's life, and he became its slave.

Adam's Legacy

These two consequences—spiritual death and enslavement to sin—are the legacy Adam has bequeathed to all of us. Every descendant of Adam is born bearing Adam's image because he is our original founding father. Genesis 5:1-3 explains this reality: "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God...When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image"—and Adam's image at that point was spiritually dead and a slave of sin. Paul said it this way: "I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin" (Rom. 7:14. See Rom. 5:12-14,

19). In other words, Paul is saying, "As a descendant of Adam, I am spiritually dead, and my body is mortal as a result of the indwelling law of sin (Rom. 8:10) because of Adam's disobedience in Eden."

The Good News

The good news is that God has provided a way for the descendants of Adam to be brought back into a relationship with Him. On the basis of Christ's finished work of redemption on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, believers can once again be indwelt by God through a "rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). Because of His presence in us, we now have all that we need in order to be what we were created to be. (2 Pet. 1:3). Those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus have God's life restored to us, and now we can grow and change.

Because the Holy Spirit is in us, believers are now equipped to "grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18) while simultaneously being "transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Because the Holy Spirit has made us spiritually alive, we realize God's promise that we are "predestined to be conformed to the likeness of (God's) Son" (Rom. 8:29). Moreover, we now see that God's purpose in saving us is the same as it was in cre-

ating us—to create humans who would reflect His image. As born again believers, we no longer reflect Adam’s image. We are now God’s adopted sons and daughters instead of Adam’s descendants, and now we are restored to reflect His character instead of being in slavery to sin, a condition which all of us inherited from Adam.

Two Barriers

God cannot restore us to reflect His image, however, until He removes two barriers that stand in the way of our being united with Him.

...we do not go to the Holy Spirit directly in order to benefit by His ministry apart from faith in Christ. This fact is important to understand because ignorance in this regard could expose us to serious deception.

The First Barrier

The first barrier is sin itself. We continually sin against God in thoughts, words and deeds and are guilty before God for these. Moreover, we are accountable to Him for their penalty which God says is death (Rom. 1:18-3:20). Our situation is hopeless; we are condemned to death by our very nature as Adam’s offspring (Eph. 2:3).

The solution to this problem is clear: we need to be *acquitted* by God, the One against whom we have sinned. This acquittal, however, is not possible unless the payment God demands is met. Amazingly, God paid His own debt in the person of God the Son. Jesus redeemed our debt of guilt by paying the atoning price with His own human blood (Rom. 3:23, 24, 5:9). God credits, or imputes, the payment of Jesus’ blood to our account when we believe, and then He wipes out our sins (Rom. 4:1-8; 1 Jn. 1:9; Acts 3:19). Not only does He credit our account with Jesus’ payment for our sin, but God now declares us not guilty as previously charged—and He does all this without violating His justice (Rom. 3:25, 26)! The believer now stands “holy in his (God’s)

sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Col. 1:22. See Rom. 8:31-39).

The Second Barrier

The second barrier to our reflecting God’s image is our sinful nature—the “law of sin” (Rom. 7:23) that we have inherited from Adam and which governs our being, causing us to sin (Rom. 7:19, 20). While under the dominion of this evil principle, we are slaves to it (Rom. 7:15-17) and cannot serve God, for Jesus said man cannot serve two masters simultaneously (Matt. 6:24).

The solution to this problem is also clearly stated: man needs to be *set free* from this evil power (Rom. 7:24). The good news is this: Jesus not only died for the sins (plural) we have committed, but He also “died to sin (singular)” (Rom. 6:10). In other words, Jesus’ death not only paid for the sins we commit, but He also “became sin” for us (2 Cor. 5:21) so we can now be dead “to sin” (Rom. 6:2) through faith in Christ. When we receive Christ’s death on our behalf, we die to the “sin principle” in us. Therefore, “anyone who has died to sin has been freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7)—freed from its dominion over us (Rom. 6:14, 17, 18).

When we believe in the Lord Jesus and His death for us, we are set free from our inherited bondage to sin and receive a new life through a new birth from the Holy Spirit. This new life gives us the ability, for the first time, to say “No” to the law of sin and to serve God “without fear in holiness and righteousness” (Lk. 1:74, 75. See Rom. 6:4, 17, 22).

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer as the representative of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus promised all His people: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you for ever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (Jn. 14:16, 17).

As Christ’s representative the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself (Jn. 16:13). Rather, He reveals the Gospel and the Lord Jesus to us—His finished work on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. Then, after He reveals these truths, He gives us faith to believe them. When we believe, the Holy Spirit applies Jesus’ finished work to us personally so our salvation becomes a dynamic experience in our lives: a cleansed conscience (Heb. 9:14), deliverance from the dominion of sin (Rom. 8:1, 2), and a new life through a new birth (Rom. 6:14, 1 Pet. 1:3). In other words, the purpose of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in us is to transform us by applying Christ’s finished work to our lives.

It is important, however, to realize that the Holy Spirit will not work in our lives independently of Christ. In other words, we do not go to the Holy Spirit directly in order to benefit by His ministry apart from faith in Christ. This fact is important to understand because ignorance in this regard could expose us to serious deception. No, we go to Jesus directly and put our faith in Him. Only then will the Holy Spirit minister in our lives by applying in us what Jesus did *for* us two thousand years ago. The Holy Spirit’s

ministry in our lives comes to us by means of our fixing “our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2), not by seeking power from the Holy Spirit directly.

The Human Aspect

In this matter of walking in the Spirit it is important that we emphasize both the divine source and the human aspect. If we emphasize the Holy Spirit’s side and disregard the believer’s side, we run into the error of quietism or mysticism. On the other hand, if we emphasize the human side and minimize the Holy Spirit’s side, we run into the error of human moralism or legalism.

In order to avoid these pitfalls, it is crucial to understand that the Holy Spirit’s work *in* the believer is *not* substitutionary as was Christ’s work on the cross *for* the believer. Often people say, “Let go and let God.” “The Lawgiver on the throne must become the Law-keeper in your heart.” But the New Testament knows nothing of this kind of passive walking in the Spirit.

The work of Jesus was *substitutionary*. As our Substitute, He stood in our place under the judgment of God and was wounded for our transgressions so we could be acquitted. He rose again from the dead so we could receive a new life through a new birth. He ascended to the right hand of the Father as our Representative and Surety.

These glorious events were done for us, outside of us, and without our effort or aid. God uses this incredibly good news to create faith in the heart of man to *passively* accept Christ as personal Savior and Lord.

The same thing cannot be said about the Holy Spirit’s ministry in the life of the believer. His work in us is not substitutionary as was Christ’s work on the cross for us. The Bible teaches that faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:8) and that good works are the fruit of the Spirit’s working in the life of the believer (Eph. 2:10). But the Bible does not teach that the Holy Spirit does the believing and good works for us. It is the human agent who does the believing. It is called “*your* faith” (2 Thess. 1:3; Phil. 2:17), not the Holy Spirit’s work of faith in you. The apostle Paul commends the Roman Christians saying, “*your* faith is being reported all over the world” (Rom. 1:8).

The Holy Spirit gives the believer the gifts and attributes of God. Further, He inspires, motivates, and empowers the believer to a life of good works, but He is not presented as the One who does the good works. On the contrary, the Bible attributes the actual deeds to the believer. For example, “Let *your* light shine before men, that they may see *your* good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of *your* righteousness” (2 Cor. 9:10). “...*your* work produced by faith, *your* labor prompted by love, and *your* endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 1:3. See also 1 Jn. 3:7). Paul again commends the Roman believers saying, “Everyone has heard about *your* obedience” (Rom. 16:19).

So then, as we live by the Spirit, God’s grace does not substitute for our cooperation. Paul appealed to the Philippian believers: “...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:12, 13). We are called to work out what He works in. That is our responsibility. Paul states it as follows: “Therefore, brothers, *we* have an obligation (a responsibility)—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature you will die; but if by the Spirit *you* put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:12, 13). Clearly, it is the believer’s responsibly to say “no” to the misdeeds of the body. But how are we to do this? There is only one way, and that is “by the Spirit”. We trust Him at the moment of temptation instead of rationalizing.

...it is crucial to understand that the Holy Spirit’s work in the believer is not substitutionary as was Christ’s work on the cross for the believer.

Paul uses other similar expressions that point to the believer’s responsibility. For example, “Since *you* died with Christ...Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly (sinful) nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed...” (Col. 2:20; 3:5). “But now *you* must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips” (Col. 3:8). “...each of *you* must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). “Clothe *yourself* with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12). Again we ask, “How do we fulfill these exhortations?” Paul would answer, “By the Spirit” (Rom. 8:13)! Trust Him instead of rationalizing.

Paul tells the Galatian believers, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:13) because “those who belong to Christ Jesus have (by the Spirit) crucified (put to death) their sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24). “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:16) because “by the Spirit” we say “no” to them (See Tit. 2:11, 12).

In other words, there are certain things the Holy Spirit will not do for us believers because they are our responsibilities. For example, when an undesirable program comes on TV, the Holy Spirit will convict the believer but will not switch off the TV or turn to another channel. This action is the responsibility of the believer. When a believer succumbs to the temptation to look at pornogra-

phy, the Holy Spirit will convict him but will not remove it from him. It is the responsibility of the believer not to look. The Holy Spirit will convict the lazy believer to go to church on Sunday morning but will not kick him out of bed. To get out of bed and go to church is the responsibility of the believer.

Importantly, we must remember that our salvation is secure because of Jesus' finished work. Once we are saved, however, we learn to live by the Spirit as a joint venture. The Holy Spirit enables, but the believer must act. The Holy Spirit's refining power and the believer's obedience "in putting to death" whatever is of his sinful nature are two sides of the same coin. The Holy Spirit provides the power for the believer to move from "I can't" (settling into a mediocre life void of victory) to "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." The Christian life, therefore, is not just a matter of being a passive channel for the Spirit. Rather, our participation is necessary in the great work of building a character that will reflect God's image for His glory. Learning to live by the Spirit is the most important work that any human being is called to do, but it is only possible after we are already saved.

There is one more defining note about living by the Spirit: it is practical and uncomplicated. The same thing cannot be said of many books on the subject which promise to give one the "keys," "secrets," and "steps" to the higher spiritual life that is supposed to make one a member of the more spiritual elite! But the type of life which Christians are called to live is clearly stated in the most straightforward manner. There are no "secrets," "mystery keys" or "special steps" here. Living by the Spirit is plain and uncomplicated.

Its Duration

"...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). Growing in grace (2 Pet. 3:18) under the governance of the Holy Spirit has relevance only to this life. The angels and those redeemed ones who are already in heaven do not need the exhortations given in the Scriptures which apply to believers who still reside in mortal bodies.

Walking in the Spirit is a continuous growth into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it will not be complete until we are in His presence forever. Paul writes, "We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:18).

The Scriptures are clear that sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit will never be complete until glorification (see Rom. 8:17-25). Said the apostle Paul: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ



Chris Badenhorst is a retired civil engineering technician who still works part time on one of South Africa's oil refineries in the city of Durban on the east coast. He is married with three step-children and one grandchild. His wife is also a former Adventist who shares his enthusiasm for the gospel of God's grace. Although they are not members of a particular denomination, they attend a local Baptist church for worship and fellowship.

Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14).

As long as we live in mortal flesh, however, we will be learning to submit our desires and temptations to the Lord Jesus and leaning on the Holy Spirit's power to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13). This ongoing sanctification, though, is only possible for those who are born again. Those who have not placed their faith in Christ's finished work do not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they are not delivered from the sinful nature to which they are enslaved.

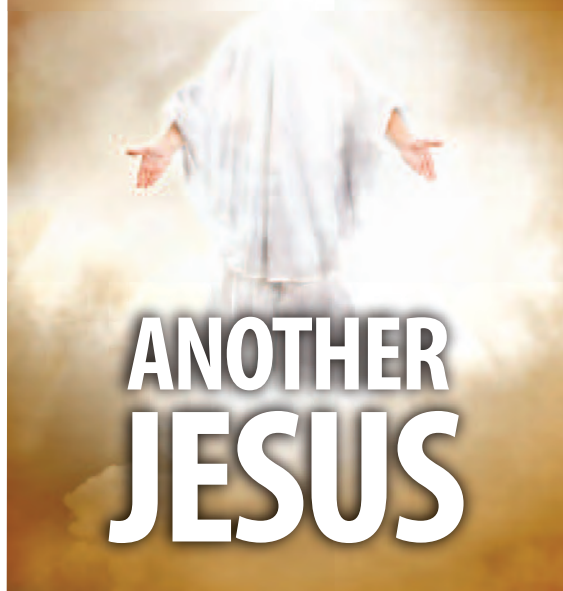
Epilogue

The glorious news of the gospel is that not only are we acquitted and set free from the control of sin by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, but we are born again in our spirits and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as "a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). At Pentecost the disciples of Christ became the Spirit-filled body of Christ. Since that day the church lives and functions by the action and power of the Holy Spirit. All that the disciples needed, and all we as believers need today, came on the day of Pentecost. God's people are those who are led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14); they live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16); they are taught by the Spirit (Jn. 14:26; 1 Jn. 2:27) and they are empowered by the Spirit (Rom. 15:13, 19; 1 Cor. 2:1-5).

The Holy Spirit is constantly available to Christ's followers, showing Christ to us, forming Christ in us, guiding us into truth and empowering us to live for the glory of God by reflecting His character in every aspect of our lives. Paul contended that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17), "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24), renewed according to the nature of him who created us (Col. 3:10). This is the reality of the Christian faith.

Galatians 5:13-6:10 clearly articulates the work of the Holy Spirit as Christians are exhorted to "walk in the Spirit" (5:16 KJV). They are promised that those who do so "will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." On the contrary, they bear "the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Walking in the Spirit means that the character of Christ (the fruit of the Spirit) is being reproduced in our lives if we are believers. In this way the Spirit enables us to live Christ-like lives in this world. In summary, the Holy Spirit's main purpose is to glorify Christ by showing Him *to us* and forming Him *in us*. We experience this increasing reality by living according to Paul's exhortation: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). †



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The Jesus I know now is so different from the Jesus I knew as an Adventist,” said a young woman who recently became a born-again Christian. Her statement resonated deep within me. “Yes,” I thought, “The Jesus presented in the teachings of Adventism is different from the scriptural Jesus.”

Scripture warns of people embracing “another Jesus”.

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough ... For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (2 Cor. 11: 3-4; 13-15).

It is important to know the biblical Jesus so we are not deceived by someone teaching “another” Jesus. The biblical Jesus is described in John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (Jn. 1:1,2,4). John in Revelation describes Jesus as the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Hebrews 1 gives Jesus the following qualities, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” The *New American Standard Bible* translates the Greek word *charakter* as exact representation. This is why Jesus was able to answer Phillip and say, “Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father ... I am in the Father and the Father is in me ...” (Jn. 14:8-11). The Biblical Jesus has always been God, with all the attributes of God. Never has Jesus lost those attributes, nor did He have to be given His “God-ness”.

In contrast, Adventism distorts the biblical Jesus and implies He was less than God at one time. For example, the Adventist Fundamental Belief #18 states that Ellen White is “a continuing and authoritative source of truth”. Thus, with doctrinal authority, she writes, “Some of the angels sympathized with Satan in his rebellion, and others strongly contended for the honor and wisdom of God in giving authority to His Son...They wished to look into His unsearchable wisdom, and

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, was the only possible payment for the debt of human sin. If He had at any time sinned or had come to earth with an imperfect character, He could not have been the acceptable sacrifice to a Holy God.

ascertain His purposes in exalting Jesus and endowing Him with such unlimited power and command” (*Early Writings*, p. 145, 146; 1920).

This idea that Jesus was exalted or given unlimited power is in direct contradiction to Scripture. The Word, Jesus, *has always been* the exact representation of the Father; He has always had all the authority of God.

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, was the only possible payment for the debt of human sin. If He had at any time sinned or had come to earth with an imperfect character, He could not have been the acceptable sacrifice to a Holy God. The writer of Hebrews describes it this way,

“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God...since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:13-15).

Adventists believe Jesus had no advantage over us but that He came to earth capable of failing. Ellen White writes, “But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 762).

The Jesus of Adventism had to “develop” his perfect character; Scripture teaches that Jesus came to earth completely righteous (Jn. 7:18).

Otherwise, He could not have been our Substitute.

The Adventist Jesus has not always been God, and He came to earth with Mary’s fallen nature. I am so thankful that I have been redeemed and have a relationship with the Biblical Jesus! The Jesus I understood as an Adventist could never have saved me! †

Carolyn Macomber was a doctoral student at Andrews University when she discovered inconsistencies between Adventism and the Bible. She withdrew her membership from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2009. She is a member of The Chapel Evangelical Free Church in St. Joseph, Michigan, where she is the leader of a Former Adventist Fellowship. She works helping families prepare their children for school readiness, and she is a small group leader for Bible Study Fellowship in Granger, Indiana.



Living in the Church, the Body of



DALE RATZLAFF

Christ

Today is August 27, and I am writing from cool Canyonville, Oregon—9,037 miles into our Vacation/Gospel Tour. We have driven over some horrific roads, seen dozens of wild animals—mountain goats, stone sheep, caribou, elk, bison, black bears, cinnamon bears, grizzly bears, wolves, porcupine, and arctic squirrels. We saw humpback and killer whales, spawning salmon, sea lions, harbor seals, bald eagles, numerous other birds, beautiful flowers, and huge glaciers.

The high point of our trip, however, has been meeting with a number of small groups and individuals and sharing with them the joy of our mutual salvation. We met with a couple in Idaho who were participants in our seven-month study of the Sabbath in the early 1980's. They live some distance from a good church, so they often have their own devotions instead of attending a service. Lee said, "We have a stack of *Proclamation!* magazines and read them over and over again."

We had a number of visits with people in our various overnight stops along the way, and we answered their questions about what we do and explained to them the importance of our ministry. We met with groups in Kelowna, British Columbia, Walla Walla, Washington, and Scappoose and Salem, Oregon. Yesterday we drove out to Reedsport, Oregon, to encourage the couple mentioned in the last *Proclamation!* who were baptized just before they left the little church group in the RV resort to escape the summer heat of Casa Grande. We had encouraged them to find a good church and get involved as soon as possible. We were overjoyed to hear that they did just that, and they faithfully attend a gospel centered, Bible-teaching church. They took us on a little tour of the spit where the fishing and pleasure boats were harbored and where a vintage car show had snarled the traffic. Then they topped off the day by treating us to a huge piece of marion berry pie.

We look forward to at least four more stops before we back our 5th wheel into its parking place by the side of our home in Casa Grande.

We were greatly encouraged to see the strong faith and clear understanding of the gospel in many who attended our meetings.

...we have one concern that I want to address in this short article. Some of the "formers" we met are not regular in church attendance. Some have not been in church for years. Age, physical condition, and location were valid reasons for some. At the same time, others were involved in a healthy church and were excited to be where the word of God is taught each week.

However, we have one concern that I want to address in this short article. Some of the "formers" we met are not regular in church attendance. Some have not been in church for years. Age, physical condition, and location were valid reasons for some. At the same time, others were involved in a healthy church and were excited to be where the word of God is taught each week. We fully understand how difficult it is to find a good church, especially in some areas. In fact, Carolyn and I have experienced this problem on several occasions. Usually, however, if we visit every church within driving distance, we will find one that is suitable.

The reality is that once we are placed into Christ, we share our position in Christ and our possessions in Christ with the body of Christ which is an interdependent family all sharing these gospel truths.

Moved into the body of Christ

First let us be clear on our definition of church. It is not a building or a denomination; rather it is the body of Christ. There is only one way to enter the true body of Christ. Consider the three following verses.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

How did the Corinthian believers enter the body of Christ? They entered by being baptized "into Christ" by the Holy Spirit. Several things need to be noted here lest we give a misleading interpretation. First, all the believers were baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. This baptism cannot refer to speaking in tongues as Paul is clear that all did not speak in tongues¹ yet all were baptized by the Spirit into the universal body of Christ.

Second, "were baptized" is aorist passive meaning that this baptism took place at a moment in time in the life of each believer. This baptism was a once for all event done by the Holy Spirit and not by the human agent who later baptized in water. It happened the moment after they responded to their God-given faith after hearing the gospel.

...all the believers were baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit. This baptism cannot refer to speaking in tongues as Paul is clear that all did not speak in tongues yet all were baptized by the Spirit into the universal body of Christ.



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Third, this baptism expresses positional truth. Before being baptized by the Holy Spirit a person is outside of Christ and none of the “in Christ” truths apply. Baptism of the Holy Spirit moves their location from the family of Adam into the family of Christ. This event has major implications which are beyond the scope of this article.

Fourth, they and we are baptized into one body. This body is the universal church of all grace believers and is expressed mystically as the body of Christ.² We should be vigilant against any organization that seeks to call people out of this one body into some other body. For when they do, they are calling people out of the one, true body of Christ.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Gal. 3:27).

Again we read that our entry into the body of Christ was through (Spirit) baptism. But here we pick up additional truth. If we have been moved into the family of Christ, we have put on Christ as an outer garment. We are to see ourselves wrapped in Christ—His righteousness, His love, His grace, His wisdom. We have all spiritual blessings in Christ and are surrounded by others who comprise His one body.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-4).

These three references all confirm that we are moved into Christ by Spirit baptism. If we have been baptized into Christ, then we are in the one body of Christ, the universal church. As a member of Christ’s one body we have many blessings and obligations. And it is these blessings and obligations that I wish to bring to the attention of our readers and those we met on our gospel tour.

In Christ each believer’s position is the same. We are forgiven of all sin; we have imputed to us the very righteousness of God;³ we are free from condemnation;⁴ we have all spiritual blessings;⁵ we are seated with Christ in heavenly places;⁶ and this list can be

greatly extended. But the believer does not have a unique right to all the “in Christ” truths.⁷ Because He has been placed into the one body of Christ, he shares these truths with all the other members in the one body.

Sharing together our possessions in Christ

We are built together in Christ

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Here Paul states that the one body of Christ, comprised of all those in Christ, is being “fitted together”. This is a construction term. Each member is seen as a part of the one building which is in the process of growing into a holy temple. This building metaphor is expanded in a following verse to include the body metaphor.

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Eph. 4:15-16).

The message of these verses is patently clear. If the one body of Christ is to grow and build itself up in love, every believer must be fitted (passive) and held together (passive) according to “the proper working of each individual part” (believer). This means that the believer is shaped or built up spiritually by other believers. There is a positive mutual involvement by others that results in a process of spiritual growth for the whole body.

We are workers together in Christ

After Paul makes one of the most profound statements on the substitutionary work of Christ he invites us to be workers together with Christ.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 5:21-6:1).

Near the end of the book of Romans, Paul sends greetings to his fellow workers “in Christ”. Note the emphasis on “in Christ” truth: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ... Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you... Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ.”⁸

Grace believers do not work to achieve oneness with Christ; rather, from their position in Christ, seated in Christ at the Father’s right hand, fully righteous in the sight of God, we work together from that position.

We are blended together in Christ

One reason that some are not in fellowship may be that they do not see themselves as an asset to the body of Christ. They may not

be in a position to give financially to the church, to teach Sunday school, or to help with important assignments in the church. Paul makes it clear that all the members of the body are blended together and all have the same importance to the body. If they have moved “into Christ” by Spirit baptism, they have equal value in the one body of Christ.

But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed [blended] the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it (1 Cor. 12:20-27).

It is easy for those of us who are older to feel that we are less needed. However, often the older saints may have wisdom and experience to share with the body. Sometimes it is the shut-ins who excel in praying for the members of the body of Christ. The bottom line is that we each have an important function in the body and need the members of the body to minister to us as well. In one of our recent meetings several of those who attended were not in fellowship. However, before the evening was over, several agreed to start a home Bible study. When a good church is not available this may be an acceptable alternative. From the record in the epistles it is clear that several, if not most, of the young churches met in homes.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house (Rom. 16:3-5).

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house (Col. 4:15).

To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house (Phm. 1:1-2).

If you are in a small, home group church it is vitally important that the gospel be thoroughly understood. Otherwise it could turn into a controlling environment where people are trying to measure up to laws for acceptance. People in a healthy group will understand they are already seated with Christ, fully righteous, fully sanctified⁹ and fully accepted.

At another stop on our gospel tour one of the attendees told of the healthy church he attended where the gospel was taught and the Bible was studied, where there were small home groups in connection with the church. Perhaps those of you who are in such a church should share that information with others by posting on the blog (<http://blog.lifeassuranceministries.org>).

I have not even mentioned the many “one another” references in the NT which clearly teach that we are members of one another and need to minister to each other and receive ministry from each other.

With *Proclamation!* being mailed to approximately 30,000 homes, I have no knowledge of most of our readers. Some may be at different stages in their transition. Others may have left one church for various reasons and feel fearful to give church another chance. I believe there is overwhelming evidence in the New Testament for the necessity of Christian fellowship in one form or another. Therefore, I implore you to keep trying, keep visiting, keep seeking until you find a healthy group where Christ and His cross are central, where Scripture is the source of authority and teaching, and where the Trinity is worshiped. At such a church you can use your spiritual gift and grow. Near the end of the book of Hebrews, after the writer has presented the truths of the new covenant, he states:

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the [most] holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near (Heb. 10:19-25). †

Endnotes

¹ 1 Cor. 12:30.

² Eph. 5:30-32.

³ Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:22.

⁴ Rom. 8:1.

⁵ Eph. 1:3.

⁶ Eph. 2:5,6.

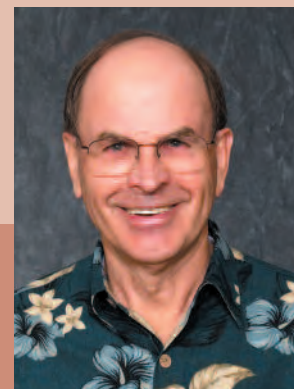
⁷ For an in-depth study of “in Christ truth” I highly recommend

The Christian “in Christ” by David K Spurbeck Sr. Know to Grow Publications, Forest Grove, Oregon. LAM Publications, LLC now carries this book.

⁸ Rom. 16:3-9.

⁹ By this will we have been sanctified (perfect passive) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10).

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



First former Adventist conference in Michigan met this past Summer

The first Michigan Former Adventist Fellowship (FAF) conference is a memory, but the warmth and excitement we experienced at The Chapel remain bright. The meetings convened on Friday, July 27, and concluded on Sunday after lunch at Papa Vino's restaurant in St. Joseph, Michigan. Attendees hailed from Alberta, Georgia, Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska, Texas, Washington, and California, and the fellowship was memorable.

Coordinator Carolyn Macomber welcomed us, and senior pastor Phil Bubar opened the weekend with a talk entitled "It's How You View the Blood", concluding with a lively exchange of stories and experiences from the audience which continued past the benediction into the evening.

Saturday's topics began with assistant pastor Corey Kugle's presentation entitled "Scripture Is Inerrant/Canon Is Closed". Colleen Tinker presented "Sabbath Matters" next, and Ben McPhaull closed the morning with "How To Study the Bible". We ate boxed lunches from Subway before reconvening for the after-

noon when Colleen Tinker presented two topics: "The Great Controversy Matters" and "Spirit Matters".

A supper of lasagna, garlic bread, and salad as well as snacks throughout the day were provided by Chapel members who were part of a hospitality ministry at the church. The evening ended with communion led by Phil Bubar and testimonies from those attending.

After attending church at The Chapel on Sunday, those of us who were still in town met in a private room for a delicious lunch of Italian food. The time there was punctuated by an unforgettable gift. One of the attendees, a 21-year-old voice major who had just received Jesus last February and was leaving Adventism in spite of the extreme opposition of her family, sang two songs *a cappella* for us—songs which she had sung frequently within Adventism but which were completely new to her now: "It Is Well With My Soul" and "Blessed Assurance". There were no dry eyes in that room while she sang and fought back her own tears as she celebrated her new joy in Jesus that transcended the pain of her losses.

Sunday night convened the first of two nights of meetings directed toward the local Christian community: "Adventism and Christianity Compared". Carolyn Macomber opened the evening with a talk defining Christianity and the ways Adventism does not fit the definition. She defined Christianity as needing the biblical gospel as defined in 2 Corinthians 15:1-4: Jesus died according to Scripture; He was buried, and He was raised to life on the third day according to Scripture. Moreover, Christianity must have the correct Jesus as defined in John 1:1-4. Adventism has another gospel and a different Jesus.

PHOTOS BY DELINA MCPHAULL



(Top L to R) 1. John Scheuneman, from The Chapel, led worship during the FAF Conference; 2. Rolaant and Mildred McKenzie came from central Michigan. Rolaant, a librarian and researcher, was influential in helping Richard Tinker begin to see the problems with Ellen White during the mid-90's when they were both members of the email list SDANet during the early days of the internet; 3. Aaron and Kelsie Petersen and their sons attended the conference on their way home to Alberta, Canada, after a family vacation. (Below) Carolyn Macomber was the organizer of the conference. She spoke on the historical background of Seventh-day Adventism on Sunday during the public meetings, "Christianity and Adventism Compared".



In the middle of her presentation she played a clip of Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University, declaring that Allah is creator-God and the Koran has all the seeds of truth. Following the clip she stood beside the podium and said with great intensity: “Allah never had a son named Jesus.” The audience was completely silent, incredibly impacted.

Ben McPhaul then presented a talk on Ellen White and showed how we know she is a false prophet, and the evening closed with a Q & A period. The second night Colleen Tinker presented talks on the Great Controversy worldview and on the common arguments for the Sabbath, showing from Scripture how the typical Adventist arguments are invalid. Another Q & A session ended this meeting as well.

On Monday night, when the crowd was about 50 instead of the 100 of the previous evening, the spiritual tension was palpable. One member of The Chapel told us after the meeting, “I could feel the spiritual tension in the room; I know what you are up against. That is the reason there were so few people here tonight.” In spite of the intensity of the exhausting dynamics, it was nonetheless affirming to have a Christian brother confirm what we had been experiencing and to understand the spiritual reality behind Adventism.

In spite of the spiritual dynamics, however, one Adventist man placed his faith in Jesus and was born again after the Sunday evening meeting. With his face full of joy, he brought his still-Adventist wife on Monday.

...one Adventist man placed his faith in Jesus and was born again after the Sunday evening meeting. With his face full of joy, he brought his still-Adventist wife on Monday.

LAM board member Cheryl Granger and her husband Woody travelled with us to this FAF weekend, and they were supportive and helpful in the details of the entire weekend. While we were there, the four of us visited the Battle Creek Heritage Village and also went with Carolyn Macomber and the McPhauls to the campus of Andrews University where we saw the Garden of Grace which represents the presence of God within the Ten Commandments. We also looked at the enigmatic sculpture of the falling cross near the garden, the sculpture called “Regeneration” outside the biology building representing the four medieval elements water, earth, fire, and wind with DNA emerging from them, and we spent some time in the heritage library where there are pictures and prophetic beasts dating from the early years of Adventism.

The weekend was intense but rewarding, and Carolyn has said that, God willing, she plans to make this Michigan FAF an annual event! †

PHOTOS BY DELINA MCPHAULL



(Top L to R) 1. Delina McPhaul from Texas, Dana Kendall from Washington, and Esther Aust from Michigan, enjoyed a real-time reunion after several years of staying in touch online; 2. Ben McPhaul, Delina’s husband, taught “How To Study the Bible” and also presented a talk on Ellen White; 3. The Chapel’s senior pastor Phil Bubar was a featured speaker during the conference. (Bottom L to R) 1. Woody and Cheryl Granger travelled with Richard and Colleen Tinker to help facilitate the conference. 5. The Q & A panel on Sunday evening included Richard Tinker, moderator, and Colleen Tinker, Carolyn Macomber, Ben McPhaul, and Phil Bubar. 6. Colleen and Richard Tinker helped facilitate the conference. Colleen also gave talks on the great controversy and the Sabbath.





Senior pastor Gary Inrig leading out in the commissioning prayer for Richard Tinker. Pastor Inrig along with the other elders of Trinity Church laid hands on Richard as part of the service, along with the charge for Richard to “lead, feed, and protect” the body of Christ at this local church.

JANICE HICKS

teaches a false gospel: a weak and fallible Jesus who could have failed, a Jesus whose death on the cross did not finish the atonement, and a Jesus who is still struggling with Satan in an attempt to vindicate God’s law and reputation.

Lead, feed, and protect

COLLEEN TINKER

On Sunday, August 26, 2012, Richard was commissioned as an elder at Trinity Church. The commissioning charge delivered by senior pastor Gary Inrig was based on Acts 20:28-32:

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Gary emphasized that the three primary functions of elders are to lead, feed, and protect the flock, and Richard’s promise before God was to honor that three-fold charge in submission to the Lord Jesus.

The heart of this passage that Gary chose for Richard’s commissioning is the warning that fierce wolves will arise from among those who are leaders, teachers, and elders of the flock and will teach false doctrine and twisted things which will not be true spiritual food. They will lead the flock astray and will not nourish them with the meat of God’s word, and the flock will become weak and sick. Godly leaders are to protect the flock from false teachers masquerading as true shepherds and from their deceptive and deadly teaching.

I am moved that Richard’s promise is not limited to Trinity Church but includes all the people whom Life Assurance Ministries and Former Adventist Fellowship touch. Adventism

Unsuspecting Christians need to be protected against the subtle but powerful proselytizing efforts of Adventist evangelism. Christians need to know that Adventism is not a slight variation of evangelical Christianity but rather is a dangerous deception. Knowing the truth about Adventism, Richard’s commitment to lead, feed, and protect the flock includes helping to expose the true nature of Adventism and to present the true gospel of the Lord Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection to those who are caught in its darkness.

There is yet another facet to Richard’s promise: protecting the flock—both at Trinity and among the distant sheep who have left Adventism—from deceptions that lead them away, almost unnoticed, from focusing exclusively on the Lord Jesus and accepting Scripture as their only authority.

The gospel is what changes us. The indwelling Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life, and we are no longer bound to sin. We do not grow and heal by pursuing disciplines and programs and methods of prayer. On the contrary, true deep healing results from commitment to truth and reality, to submitting ourselves to the Lord Jesus as He reveals Himself in His word, and to allowing His Spirit to renew our minds with His word.

Knowing we are new creatures, adopted by the Father, made righteous by the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can release our relentless quest for “more”. We can trust Him to know better than we know what we need in order to grow and heal. We can let Him lead us instead of holding onto our “right” to expect Him to do what we think we need. We can submit to Him because He is our Father.

Richard has been commissioned to lead, feed, and protect the flock. We, as sheep in God’s flock, are called to be discerning and to follow leaders who honor the Lord Jesus and teach His word. We are to eat the meat of Scripture, and we are to allow God’s word to protect us from seductive teachings that take our eyes off Jesus.

“And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). †



Thanks to Chris Lee

Kudos to you folks for your last issue of *Proclamation!*, and especially to Chris Lee, who had to sit through all those evenings of blasphemy and false doctrine. There's no way I could have done it... What is it about people that they try so hard to get back to the law and their own efforts?...

The only advice I can give is the same thing Chris said at the back of the magazine. "If you need a little dose of the good stuff, try reading through Ephesians 2:1-10 and making it personal. That's what I just did, and I can tell you, it's *Good Medicine*."

It's all good medicine. But for medicine to work, you have to take it, or in this case, read it. Keep up the good fight, folks. You'll get a reward for your efforts one day.

PHOENIX, AZ

Prophecy shows in the third world

Having just read the excellent article "Prophecy Show 2012," by Chris Lee, I'd like to say that it's not only the annual Revelation Seminars that teach those points in a similar script, in a little over two weeks, and with laptops and projectors that wow the audiences. I'm talking about the short-term missions of Robert Folkenberg's

Proclamation! News

Send your email address to receive our soon coming weekly email of news and new content on the web at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

ShareHim (SH) organization that are conducted by volunteers and pastors in many third-world countries. Short-term missionaries are sent to poorer, less-educated areas of the world where the traveling show is a novelty, and the few people in the audience who aren't already Adventists, don't have the resources to compare doctrines with other denominations. Those SH volunteers who are to run their own mission site are given strict instructions at orientation not to deviate from the script, or to insert their own experiences or sermons, or change the order of the sermons....

The baptism statistics, on which the ministries rely for fundraising in North America, are pumped up by local church members getting

rebaptized, some for the third time. In some countries, those newbies who ask for baptism are not judged "ready" after such a short time, and are shunted into a baptismal class for a few weeks or months. One incentive for their perfect attendance is that they receive a Bible when they're baptized. (At least they're Bible Society editions in the local language, not Adventist-specific.)

PHOENIX, AZ

Spewing hatred

I have never requested to receive your magazine, and it is at best, insulting to receive such rubbish, filled with so much hate against a certain mainstream Christian religion. I am not a Seventh-day Adventist, but I am offended either way, that another human being (so called Christian organization) would spew so much hatred towards another Christian Church....

You spew venom and hatred because maybe you guys had a bad experience while in that particular building or church. But does that give you the right to spew so much hatred towards other human beings in that church?...

Dale and Colleen, you have so much hatred in your lives, that I feel sorry for you. I have been a soccer coach in my church and church school for 25 years, and I am a teacher. I would hate to have you in my church spewing so much junk to our kids, since they do not understand why you are doing this. Please delete my name ASAP from your mailing list. The magazine is unwanted in my Christian home.

LOVELAND, CO

I have found the peace and assurance that I have been seeking for 90 years. Thank you so much for your wonderful ministry. I am free at last!

Free after 90 years!

As a Seventh-day Adventist I had many questions and had no assurance of my salvation. But after studying Romans and Galatians with my son and reading *Proclamation!* over the last year, I have found the peace and assurance that I have been seeking for 90 years.

Thank you so much for your wonderful ministry. I am free at last!

HIGHLAND RANCH, CO

Be done with it

I don't know why I'm receiving your magazine. I did not request it, nor do I appreciate it. If you're disgruntled with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I'm sorry for whatever caused you to become that way. I live my life by the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I also believe if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

I read nothing in your publication that portrays the love of Christ or that would make me want to join your group. Your magazine is so full of hatred against Adventism that I don't see how you can say that you are now "free." I don't see how any of you can enjoy being a Christian, or life itself, hauling around that kind of baggage.

So you were unhappy as an Adventist. You left. Now be done with it, and leave the rest of us alone.

FRESNO, CA

Be honest enough...

For several years I have been receiving *Proclamation!* I have perused it with interest. I commend the article in the June, 2012 issue, "The Bible is Absolutely Reliable". It confirms what I have suspected for years and vindicates the Bible's own claims to be the word of God...

I also wonder what Life Assurance Ministries is doing to alleviate the awful conditions of many of the third world countries. How many HIV orphans, for example, are being cared for by your organization? What humanitarian efforts do you sponsor?

As a final word I hope you will be honest enough to tell that Dale Ratzlaff's mother who died 2 or 3 years ago was a loyal Adventist and his sister is one even now.

COLLEGE PLACE, WA

Editor's response: Addressing social ills is absolutely a fruit of the gospel, but it is not The Gospel. While feeding the poor and caring for HIV victims are activities the New Testament clearly affirms and even commands, those commands are addressed to people who are already born again. People who are not born again can also have a social conscience and often do significant humanitarian work, but those works are not redemptive. They do not offer eternal hope to the recipients unless the aid is accompanied by the gospel. Life Assurance Ministries came into existence with the mandate to do the greatest humanitarian work of all: disseminate the true gospel and

the knowledge of the Lord Jesus to people who are bound in a worldview that denies the biblical gospel. A ministry must have a clear focus and purpose, and ours is to help Adventists know Jesus and to help Christians and Adventists understand how Adventism differs from biblical Christianity. God provides us only enough funding to do the

presentations that it was finding his mother's heavily-marked *Clear Word* Bible as he was going through her belongings that generated his commitment to expose the heretical nature of that book. Finding that *Clear Word* when she died was what caused him to drop his reservation that Adventism itself might be redeemable, and

I am so happy to be free of Adventism and to rest in Jesus and His complete atonement for my sins. I know I am saved, and for the first time I am no longer afraid of "the end"

ministry of *Proclamation!*. We have absolutely no surplus funds, and we are obligated to Him to use this money for what He has called us to do. Individually, we who are on the *Proclamation!* staff give sacrificially of our time, resources, homes, and tables to people in spiritual and emotional and physical need.

Finally, Dale has publicly spoken of his Adventist mother's death. He has stated in several

he began to call it a cult. None of us at Life Assurance Ministries has ever been reluctant to admit we have loyal Adventist family members from whom we have suffered unresolved relationship breaks.

Time to tell my family

The time is coming soon for me to tell my family and friends that I am no longer Adventist. I have not been to church with my family for a couple of months. I just can't go anymore. I am so happy to be free of Adventism and to rest in Jesus and His complete atonement for my sins. I know I am saved, and for the first time I am no longer afraid of "the end". What a huge blessing the magazine, blog, and forum have been for me. Thank you so much for all you do to help "formers" and Adventists.

Please continue to pray for me and my family. My [spouse] is searching and beginning to question some Adventist doctrine although currently believing that Adventism is the closest church to biblical truth. Please pray for eyes to be opened and for me to know when and what to share. God bless you!

TULLAHOMA, TN

Stop NOW

Please remove me from your mailing list. I did not ask to receive this trash and want it to stop NOW!

NEW PLYMOUTH, ID

With Jesus

I am so thankful to have left Adventism. We have been able to raise our five children to truly know who Jesus is and to know the promise of the resurrection! I know [my recently deceased husband] is with Jesus!

PINEDALE, CA

Keep it up!

I received your magazine over the weekend and couldn't stop reading it. Great job! My husband and I are recovering Adventists. We are so glad there is a ministry to the Adventist church members. Keep it up!

RIO RANCHO, NM

Move On!

After reading your journal, *Proclamation!*, I would like to request that you remove my name from future mailings. I found your journal writers obsessed with Adventist bashing. It's OK to disagree with Adventist doctrine and leave the church to find a community of believers that you feel comfortable with, but move on! What's your point, your goal, your mission—to continually try to drag down a domination? Move on! Get a life!

Every single article with the exception of "The Bible Is Absolutely Reliable" by Robert Bowman and "The Stars Are Talking" by Martin Carey had something negative to say about the Adventist Church. I enjoyed the article by Dale Ratzlaff entitled "Wrath", but even he couldn't resist the temptation to criticize the Adventists by including their scholars with the liberals in promoting the moral influence theory of the atonement (p.20). Move on!

Now I don't personally buy into the entire 2300 days prophecy as detailed by the Adventist church, but I have studied and believe that I have come up with an alternate

interpretation that is scripturally based, logical, and historical. It is easy to criticize another's view and tear it apart, but it is an entirely different subject to present an equally logical, reasonable, scripturally solid view of the same prophecies. Move on!...

If you are going to criticize and tear down, then we need to hear about something better that we can put in its place. I would like to see you present an interpretation of equal scholarly merit of each and every prophecy that you disagree with. I will repeat myself—it's easy to criticize, but it's much harder to lay out an alternate view. Move on!

Feel free to publish this in your Letters to the Editor if you're secure enough with criticism.

MODESTO, CA

Editor's response: We definitely have come up with something better than the Adventist scheme of eschatology: the gospel of the Lord Jesus! It surprised us to learn that it is not eschatology that determines the true church. Eschatology is a secondary issue. Christians share the finished work of Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and the inerrant reliability of Scripture. Moreover, Christians are defined by their being born again by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, if you've read our publication for a time, you'll realize that we're quite secure with criticism! That security comes from our security in the Lord Jesus; because of our belief in Him, He has transferred us out of the domain of darkness (Col 1:13), and we have passed from death to life (Jn. 5:24)!

Correction

On page 12 of the Summer, 2012 issue of *Proclamation!*, paragraph 2, the text Acts 12:32, 33, 39 should have read Acts 13:32, 33, 39.

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

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

s. California

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE 2013

Living by the

HOLY Spirit

FEBRUARY 15-17, 2013

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We need your support now

We want to keep you up-to-date regarding our financial needs for *Proclamation!* Our publication of this issue has been slightly delayed as we have waited for the money to cover the printing and mailing to arrive, but as you can now see, God has graciously provided it once again.

Occasionally we receive letters suggesting that we at Life Assurance Ministries (LAM) are using this ministry to pad our pockets; others criticize us for bashing a religion with our money instead of feeding the poor and caring for the homeless. In reality, LAM operates from issue to issue. We have no savings, and sometimes the Ratzlaffs and the Tinkers forego their monthly contracted stipends in order to be sure there is enough money to cover production costs. God has been faithful as He

has taught us to trust Him to provide and to keep walking forward by faith.

We love resting in God's sovereignty that includes His ownership of everything: all creation including human wealth and plans, and the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10). Ever since one of our Trinity Church elders prayed for us that God would sell a couple of His cattle for the magazine, we have been trusting Him to do just that.

We ask you to join us in praying for God's continued guidance and provision, and we pray also that if He convicts you to donate toward this magazine, that He will abundantly supply all you need in Christ Jesus. He is faithful. He knows your needs as He knows ours, and He will give us what we need as we trust Him with our money and our time.

We praise our Father for all of you who sacrifice to make *Proclamation!* possible!

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The life A F T E R with Chris Lee

I work for a nonprofit hospital and was recently thinking about how we differ from for-profit healthcare companies. It's not that we're unconcerned about our financials. To the contrary, as an administrator I spend a good deal of time assuring that we're providing quality care in a fiscally responsible way. I care a great deal about the financial performance of our organization. So what's the difference between us and the for-profits? I think it comes down to a matter of purpose.

Ultimately, the purpose of any for-profit corporation is to provide financial benefits to those who own or invest in the company. The purpose of a nonprofit organization should be to fulfill its mission. That's a significant difference. If I were an executive at a for-profit, many of my decisions would be driven by the need to maximize profits for investors. As an executive for a nonprofit I am concerned about our financial performance because poor stewardship will end or limit our mission. If we aren't fiscally responsible we won't be here to care for our community tomorrow. If we perform well, we generate funds that can then be put back into maintaining and upgrading our facilities, investing in staff training, procuring new technologies, and expanding the services we offer. The money is just a tool to fulfill the mission.

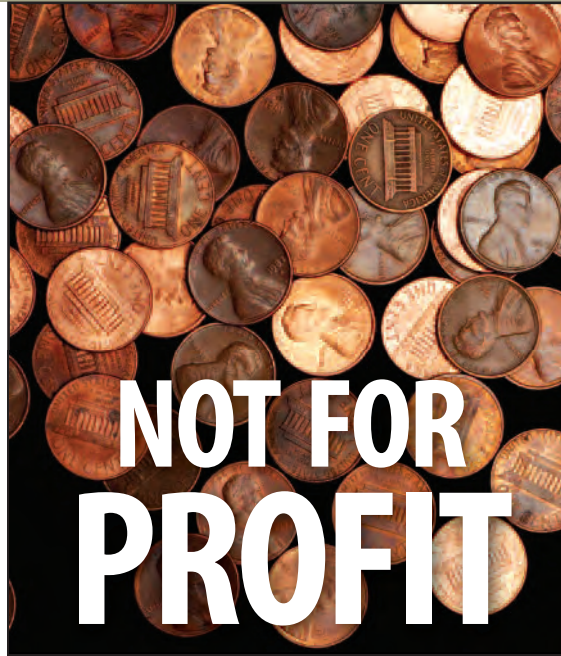
I don't think there is anything wrong with companies or individuals making money, even lots of it. It comes down to purpose. Is our purpose to grow comfortable, feel secure, and consume our profits on ourselves or is it to be on mission building the Kingdom? Are we consuming our resources on things that are

fleeting or is money simply a tool for investing in that which lasts forever?

These are two very different approaches to life. Let's take saving for retirement for an example. We all agree that this is a prudent thing to do, but if my focus in life is on



Chris Lee lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with his wife, Carmen, and daughters, Ashlyn and Alyssa. They attend the Lincoln Berean Church. Chris is a self-described "theology junkie" whose mission is to proclaim the unfathomable grace of Christ in a clear, understandable, and Biblical way. Chris is the editor of the *Proclamation!* Blog at ProclamationMagazine.com. You may contact Chris by email at ambulator@gmail.com.



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raises the bar in everything else; why not in giving, also? Under the New Covenant it's not about living by a proscriptive formula for giving, but about living a life that's on mission.

I have friends who are so on mission that they have given up careers to be involved in the ministry they are called to. They have given up steady income in favor of trusting God to care for them. Some months they simply live on faith when there are no funds coming in. Their lives go far beyond "tithing". They're not just giving God 10% of what they have. Everything they have is in God's hand. I'm not there yet, but I'm inspired by their example. Striving towards sacrificial giving sometimes leaves me feeling scared and insecure, but steps of faith are never comfortable. I don't want to waste my life on fleeting self-profit. I want to step out of my comfort zone and live the life after Adventism on mission, investing in that which is eternal.†

self-profit, then saving becomes all about building a self-reliant sense of security. If that's my purpose, then I will never have enough. If my purpose is to build the kingdom, then saving becomes about being able to stay on mission both now and in the future. With this focus I need not feel compelled to hoard excessively but can be strategic in using the resources I'm given over a lifetime.

I've talked to some former Adventists who were turned off on giving by the way they experienced it in Adventism. The word "tithe" generates an emotional response that prevents them from fellowshiping with any congregation that uses the terminology. Personally, I don't believe there is a New Covenant command to give a certain percentage of one's income, but I do believe that the New Covenant