

ARE YOU LED BY THE LESSER LIGHT OR BY SOLA SCRIPTURA?

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Proclamation!

**FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS**

SUMMER 2013
VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

SAVED, KEPT, AND SECURE

HUMBLE YOURSELF AND REPENT

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

JUSTICE: GOD'S FORGOTTEN ATTRIBUTE

CREATION: WHERE IS SABBATH

**ADVENTISM'S 150 YEARS
OF DISAPPOINTMENT**

WHEN DOES IT END?



COLLEEN TINKER

They're still hoping

I was watching a segment on the history of the Adventist organization last Monday when the reporter on Adventist News Network startled me. She told of Adventist co-founder Joseph Bates conversing with a friend who asked him, “What is the ‘good news?’”

Bates responded, “The ‘good news’ is that the seventh day is the Lord’s Day.”

“And,” the reporter continued, “that is how he shared the good news about the Sabbath.”

Of course. The Sabbath has been the Adventist good news for 150 years. I pondered then that “good news” isn’t the only Christian term reinterpreted within Adventism. “Hope” has a unique Adventist meaning as well.

“Hope” has a unique Adventist meaning as well... “This hope” has been the Adventist uncertain wish for 150 years.

In 1962 Wayne Hooper composed a theme song for the General Conference session held that year in San Francisco, California. “We have this hope,” the song began, “hope in the coming of the Lord.” The Adventist version of the second coming, however, includes the preliminary time of trouble during which the righteous will have to stand at the end of the investigative judgment without a mediator. The “hope” that is the Adventist second coming includes the first resurrection when the righteous dead will discover at last that they were safe to save. “This hope” has been the Adventist uncertain wish for 150 years.

Seventh-day Adventism has claimed the terms “good news” (or “gospel”) and “this hope” to define their identity described by their name. Scripture, however, defines these terms differently.

Peter identified the good news as “peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)” (Acts 10:36), and further defined the gospel as the three-fold fact that Jesus died for our sins according to Scripture, that He was buried, and that He was raised from the dead on the third day according to Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Moreover, the Bible defines “hope” not as something that might be good news for us, depending upon whether we were faithful enough to be saved, but as a certainty. It is not a “maybe”. Furthermore, the Bible never describes “hope” as the second coming. Biblical hope is the risen Jesus, the “hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). Hope is the fact that through faith in Jesus we have peace with God

and already stand in His grace, rejoicing “in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). Hope is the mystery of Christ in us (Col. 1:27).

In short, the good news is that God has kept His promises and has sent His Son to die for sin, to be buried, and to rise from death to free us from our natural state of sin and death when we believe in Him. Because of this good news, when we believe, we live in the already-accomplished hope that we have peace with God and eternal life that cannot be taken from us (Jn. 5:24; 10:28-29). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and Christ lives in us. Our souls are anchored in the presence of the Father by the risen and ascended Lord Jesus whose blood has purchased us from death.

Adventism, on the other hand, has identified itself for 150 years by a substitute gospel of seventh-day sabbatarianism and by a wish—not true hope—that the second coming might be a time of discovering they’re saved and not doomed to burn. The Adventist second coming is an event which members believe they have delayed by their disobedience—a delay which is already a judgment on them for their failure to finish the work.

In this issue we look at the implications of this year’s 150th anniversary of Adventism. Steve Pitcher shows how *The Clear Word* confirms that Adventism’s claim to sola scriptura is trumped in practice by Ellen White’s prophetic voice. Dale Ratzlaff discusses the nature of truth and challenges us to receive truth no matter the cost. Carolyn Macomber looks at God’s justice and mercy, and Elaina Matthews shares her faith story. Rick Barker examines the sixth Adventist Fundamental Belief, and Chris Lee asks, When does it end?

We pray that the real good news of Jesus and the certain hope of being eternally anchored in Him will be more real than the fear of questioning the 150-year legacy of our shared past. †

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God meant it for **GOOD**

Is it really worth it to leave Adventism when I know it's not "the truth"?

Follow several of the on-line discussion groups and support groups for transitioning Adventists as well as calls and emails that come to me. I am aware there are many of you who are starting on your journey and who are now facing rejection from family and friends. It is not easy to decide to follow truth when others condemn you for so doing, and it impedes long cherished relationships.

The importance of following truth cannot be over-emphasized. Abraham was blessed because he believed and followed God's instructions and declarations. Lot's wife lost her life when she chose not to follow truth. The writer of Hebrews counsels Jewish Christians not to throw away their confidence in following Christ but to endure.

But we are not among those who shrink back and thus perish, but are among those who have faith and preserve their souls (Heb. 10:39).

A short time after Carolyn and I were forced to resign from Adventist ministry, one of the church officers of the Watsonville Seventh-day Adventist church sent a letter to our home addressed "To the church of Satan". It surprised us as it came from a person whom we had counted to be a friend and one whom had been very supportive of our ministry up to the time I shared some of the results of my study. We knew, however, that this person was acting from his reference point, and we did not hold it against him. He had not done the study that we had. Why

I now have two grown children, three grandchildren, and six great grandchildren who all love the Lord because you were willing to put it all on the line for Jesus.

do I mention this? To help you know that God works even the hurtful things for His good. Here is an email I received a few weeks ago and included here with his permission.

Good Evening Dale,

You may remember me and/or my family. My father was Dr. Donald Crosiar in Watsonville, California, and you were his pastor. It is rather ironic that my father was instrumental in having you removed from your position of pastor within the

Watsonville SDA church (at least that is what he claimed)—and it was your writings that brought my family back to the Lord some years later. I now have two grown children, three grandchildren, and six great grandchildren who all love the Lord because you were willing to put it all on the line for Jesus. I often say that God has a real sense of humor. He

used my dad to put you into a position where you could influence his decedents into a relationship with Jesus...

Everett & Megan Crosiar, Forest Falls, California

I am reminded of the story of Joseph recorded in Genesis 50. When he revealed himself to his brothers, they rightly became afraid, but Joseph comforted them with these words:

"Do not be afraid, am I in God's place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive" (Gen. 50:19-20).

So, if you are facing criticism, losing cherished relationships, and question, "Is it really worth it to follow truth?," fear not. I can testify to the truth of God's word.

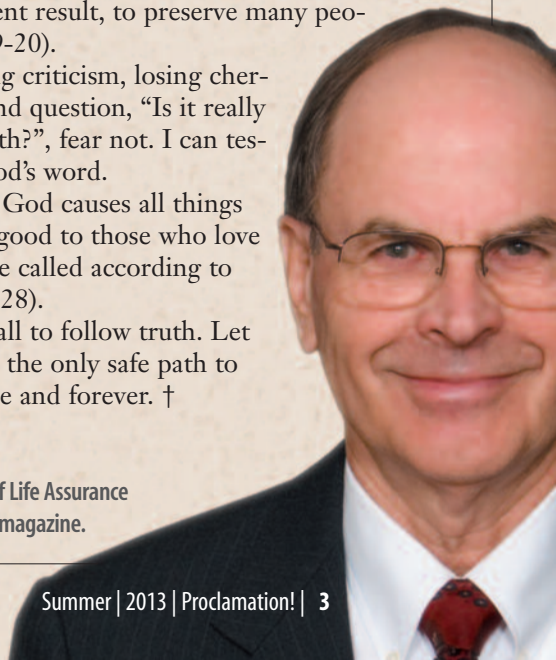
And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

God has called us all to follow truth. Let us not turn back. It is the only safe path to lasting happiness, here and forever. †



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 Ratzlaf.com or by phoning 800-355-7073, or 520-836-9790.

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



“Why is keeping the Sabbath so important to you?”

The question reverberated in my mind, piercing through my scripted answers and years of conditioned responses. It hacked through the confusing twists and turns of my worldview and cut to the root of the fearful gospel by which I lived. The tears came unbidden, and, in a broken voice, I was finally able to admit with unbridled honesty the driving force behind my Sabbath loyalty.

“If I stop keeping the Sabbath, then I will lose my salvation.”

I grew up in a multi-generational, conservative Seventh-day Adventist family. We embraced every historic doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism, and, although on the conservative side, we were well within the mainline Seventh-day Adventist church, and I was steeped in Adventism.

My family instilled in me a love and deep respect for Ellen White and her writings. While I never would have admitted to others or myself that I held Ellen White on the same level as the Bible, in practice I viewed her writings as being as important—if not more important—than the Bible. I finished reading my first Ellen White book on my own when I was only 11. By the time I was 20, I had read at least seven of them completely and had read large portions of many more.

Just before my ninth birthday I eagerly attended my first Revelation Seminar, and about a year later, my family started an Adventist church plant in which I was actively involved for the rest of my childhood. My parents homeschooled me through many of my early grades, but I graduated from the eighth grade of an Adventist school, and then I graduated from Campion Academy. Campion had a more progressive environment than did the Adventism in which I grew up, but this academy still taught and confirmed every historic Adventist doctrine. I received straight A's in every Bible class and on every theological paper. I was a faithful Seventh-day Adventist and loved everything about it. I had absolutely no desire ever to leave the Adventist church.

Sometimes, being an Adventist gave me a sense of pride and elation. I was so blessed to have been born into the remnant church, to have been born into the truth! Indeed, I had been privileged to receive light and truth that no other church was practicing. I was so happy to be a part of God's special end-time remnant church and to be spreading the Three Angel's Messages.

At other times, being an Adventist sent me into crushing despair. I had been taught that if I lived up to the light that I had been given and never rejected any of it, then I would be ready to stand before God without a mediator at the close of probation. But I knew that, no matter how hard I tried, I could not live up to that light. I lived in fear and uncertainty of my salvation. I used to cry myself to sleep at night begging that God would help me to stop sinning and get one step closer to perfection, or I would beg Him to take away my free will so that I could never choose to reject Him at the last minute. Any time I sinned, I would have a picture in my head of the recording angel writing down what I had done in the books in the

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ELAINA MATTHEWS

heavenly sanctuary, and I knew I must confess that sin before I forgot about it, lest any forgotten sins be held against me in the investigative judgment.

In short, I was a mass of contradictions. On the one hand, from a very young age I heard the call of God and felt Him drawing me. I had a deep longing to know Jesus. On the other hand, the Jesus that I knew was a weak Jesus who was not even finished with His atonement, and, because of this incomplete work, He was not strong enough to save me or to keep me.

Trouble brewing

After it became apparent that I would not be able to afford an Adventist college, it was decided that I would attend a public university that was close to an Adventist college because, in our minds, this solution was the next best thing to attending one. After spending one year of college in my hometown, I found myself as a vocal performance major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), right on the doorstep of Union College. I had many friends at Union from Campion and soon became familiar with the Adventist community in Lincoln. However, trouble was brewing with my chosen major.

In October of 2011, my junior year as a voice major, my voice teacher asked me why I would not audition for any of the operas at UNL. One of the performances was always on Friday night, so I told her that I could not because of the Sabbath. She invited me off campus to discuss this dilemma, and I agreed. I felt this conversation was an opportunity for me to share the “Sabbath Truth” with my teacher.

Instead, it was in this meeting that my voice teacher asked me a rather piercing question: “Why is keeping the Sabbath so important to you?”

D, KEPT, AND SURE

At first I gave her my scripted response, but she kept pressing for an answer to her “why?” Finally, the realization struck me so hard that I started to cry. I said tearfully that if I didn’t keep the Sabbath, I would lose my salvation. What she said next stopped me dead in my tracks and cut through all of my programmed responses. She gently told me that I needed to read the Bible for myself and find out where my salvation comes from. Her words made such an impression on me that I was driven to do just that. I started reading the Bible without Ellen White interpreting for me for the first time in my life.

I read through Romans and Galatians, and both of those books were telling me the exact opposite of what I had always been taught as an Adventist! This dissonance created huge turmoil in my heart. As blasphemous as it sounds, I literally felt as if the Bible was lying to me. Adventism was the truth, so how could it disagree with the Bible? Even though what I was reading in Scripture was telling me that Adventism was wrong, I ignored the evidence and pushed it away, because it simply could not be true. After all, I could not reject any of the light that I had been given, or I would be putting myself in grave danger.

Christmas surprise

Christmastime brought a new revelation about the roots of Adventism. At my university, the choirs come together to produce a Christmas concert every year. One of the classic carols that we sang that year was “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” I memorized and internalized the words to that hymn. When I went home for Christmas and sang this same hymn at my church using the Adventist hymnal, I was surprised to discover that the words were different. The part about the Trinity and



Comparison of two versions of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Original version, verse two:

Christ, by highest Heav’n adored;
Christ the everlasting Lord;
Late in time, behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th’incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.

Adventist hymnal version, verse two:

Christ by highest heaven adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord;
In the manger born a king,
While adoring angels sing,
“Peace on earth, to men good will;”
Bid the trembling soul be still,
Christ on earth has come to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!

about Jesus being God had been removed. The original words of the second verse of this carol contained a majestic salute honoring the Trinity and the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

However, in the Adventist hymnal, this glorious text had been replaced with a verse that completely eliminated Jesus’ deity and His virgin birth (see box above, compare text in bold).

I remembered being told that some hymns in the Adventist hymnal had been altered because some of the doctrines expressed in the original hymns were “incorrect,” but Adventists believed in the deity of Christ and in the Trinity, right? Why had these words been changed?

Not trinitarian

A little research revealed that early Adventists did not believe in the Trinity or in the deity of Christ but were Arian or semi-Arian at best. Ellen White repeatedly contradicted herself as to the deity of Christ, and James White went to his grave denying the deity of Christ. Even J. N. Andrews, for whom the Adventist theological seminary is named, did not believe that Jesus is God. Today, in fact, the Adventist view of the Trinity is not the same as the orthodox doctrine of One God in three Persons taught in Scripture. The Adventist trinity is more in line with tritheism because it ignores that God is one in substance. Moreover, there are many leftover teachings from Adventism’s “Arian period”, including that Jesus is Michael the Archangel, which I had been clearly taught. This news left me stunned and bothered me deeply.

By February of 2012 I couldn’t keep all the contradictions I was seeing between Scripture and Adventism to myself and decided to reach out. One evening in my apartment, I did a search on the internet for former Adventists in Lincoln and came across a man named Chris Lee. I wrote him a letter, telling him about my confusion and frustration. At that point I wanted badly to embrace the idea that I just needed to believe in Jesus as my Savior by repenting and putting my trust in Him, but my Adventist chains would not let me accept this sim-

ple fact. Instead, I sent Chris a cry for help.

No sooner had I sent the email than I received a phone call. It was from a Bible teacher in Southern California, Dr. Walter Bramson. My voice teacher knew him, and had given him my phone number. She had told him that I was questioning Adventism. After he introduced himself, I told him a little bit of my background and of how I was struggling.

One of the very first things he said to me was, “Do you know what a cult is?”

That question made me furious! But, in spite of my feelings, I listened to what he had to say. He

told me that the Sabbath had nothing to do with my salvation, either in obtaining or maintaining it, and that it was never a requirement for me to keep the Sabbath in the first place because I was a Gentile. He was confirming what I had studied, but I still could not accept it. After all, he wasn’t an Adventist, so that meant that he did not have the truth that I possessed!

At the end of the conversation, he asked me if I believed in Jesus, and I said yes. He said, well, then, if you believe in Jesus as your Savior, then you are saved! I told him that it couldn’t be that simple.

I hung up the phone, but his words still rang true in my heart.

Still pondering the gospel he had spoken to me, I went back to my laptop. A couple of weeks before, I had written a blog post about my questions. Since I had posted the blog, no one had even looked at it, much less commented on it. At that moment, however, I suddenly had several comments, and they were all from former Adventists!

How did these people find me? In the space of that phone call, several former Adventists had suddenly found my blog, and they were all telling me that they understood, that they had had the same questions, and that they were praying for me. I could not believe what had happened.

I found out later that a former Adventist had been doing some research that night for his own blog about coming out of Adventism. He had merely typed the word “Adventism” into Google, and of all the websites that could have come up under this query, my blog site showed up in his search engine results! He felt compelled to read my blog post because the title, “What Must I Do to be Saved,” caught his eye. That question is not something that would be likely to be found under the tag “Adventism.” He read it and felt impressed to pray for me and to share my blog post with a group of former Adventists on Facebook. He found me and shared my blog at about the same time that I was writing my letter to Chris Lee, and that is how all those “formers” found me in the space of a phone call. God’s timing is perfect.

Chris Lee wrote me back and referred me to Ane Edwards, a former Adventist lady who also lived in Lincoln. That week, I met with her every day and started studying with her. My jaw dropped when she had me read Leviticus 16 out loud, and I realized that the scapegoat could not be Satan, that only Jesus could bear and atone for my sins. I did a covenant study in my apartment, and immediately I knew that I had been lied to my whole life.

That entire week, I felt the spiritual warfare raging around me. I was seized by a fear so intense that it completely disrupted my life. I literally felt as if something at the very core of my being, something very deep, dark, and evil, was being ripped out of me.

At the end of the week, I was again alone in my apartment one Friday night. I read chapter 28 of *The Great Controversy* again, only this time I was seeing it through different eyes. As I read Ellen White's words on the investigative judgment, all I felt was darkness and no hope. Then I got out my Bible and read through the first two chapters of Ephesians, and I was blown away.

Three things stood out to me. The first was that the Holy Spirit is the seal and guarantee of our salvation. I had always been taught that the Sabbath was the Seal of God, but Scripture was telling me that the seal was the Holy Spirit. I had been taught that Ellen White said that we could not say that we are saved, and all of the doctrines of Adventism showed me that salvation could never be sure. However, the Bible clearly taught that the saved are sealed with the Holy Spirit, and that He is given as a guarantee of salvation. Ephesians used very strong language that affirmed salvation assurance for the believer.

The second revelation that impacted me was that I was dead in my transgressions and sins; this fact was why I needed to be saved by grace alone. I had heard countless times from Doug Batchelor, a prominent Adventist evangelist and the director of Amazing Facts, that "We are saved *from* our sins, not in our sins!" While we are saved from our sins, the Bible also says that we are made alive while we are still dead in our sins, for it is by grace that we are saved. My condition was far worse than just having a propensity to sin; I was actually dead. My spiritual death was why I needed grace.

The third and last thing Ephesians revealed to me that night was that faith is a gift from God and not something that I can produce or manufacture. I had always thought that faith was

something I had to muster up within myself. However, I could not produce this faith; it had to come from outside of myself because I was born dead. I suddenly realized that God had given me faith, and I must now act on that faith in belief by repenting and putting my trust in Jesus.

That was the moment that I finally understood the gospel. I trusted Jesus as my Savior that night. I knew that I needed Him to be my Savior and Substitute and that I needed His grace and nothing else. I turned to the Lord Jesus in repentance and accepted the free gift of salvation by grace through faith and was born again that night.

Jesus is worth the cost

Leaving Adventism comes at a very high cost. I have lost much leaving the Adventist church, but Jesus is worth it. Knowing Him is so much better than anything I left behind.

I left the Adventist church because it not only compromises the gospel but actually teaches a false gospel. The true gospel is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Adventism teaches a different Jesus, and the Jesus I know now is not the same Jesus I knew in Adventism. The Jesus I now know is fully God and not Michael the Archangel. He is finished with atonement; He gives me secure salvation assurance. Moreover, He forgave me ALL my sins (past, present, and future) and will never hold me under condemnation. He is my eternal Sabbath rest; He disarmed Satan at the cross and came to earth first and foremost to be my Substitute. He had no chance of failing His mission because He is Sovereign God. He will never stop interceding for me and is the One who bore all my sins, my guilt, and my shame. He is the One who took the penalty and the blame for them all, ultimately and forever.

This is the Jesus Who reached down and saved me while I was still dead in my transgressions and sins, and, through the Holy Spirit, He brought me out of my spiritually dead state and gave me new birth so that now my spirit is alive in Christ. This is the Jesus Who is holding me in His hand and will never let me go. This is the Jesus with Whom I am seated in the heavenly realms throughout all eternity. I am kept by His grace and have been declared righteous forever.

I know that I am saved. †

Elaina Matthews grew up in a multi-generational, conservative Seventh-day Adventist family in Pueblo, Colorado, and attended Campion Academy. She is a senior vocal performance major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and attends Lincoln Berean Church. She hosts and moderates a Facebook group for young adults that is related to the Life Assurance Ministries website, BibleStudiesforAdventists.com. Her group, Bible Studies for Adventists: Young Adults, is an open group that seeks to compare what is taught in the Collegiate Quarterly with Scripture.

This photo was taken during Elaina's testimony at the Former Adventist Fellowship Conference in Redlands, California, last February, where she first told her testimony printed here. She also sang "Blessed Assurance" and "Before the Throne of God Above." You may view her testimony on YouTube.



Adventism's 150 years of DISAPPOINTMENT

COLLEEN TINKER

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the Seventh-day Adventist church. In honor of this event, General Conference president Ted Wilson addressed the members of the world-wide organization's executive committee on Sabbath, April 13, at the Seventh-day Adventist Tabernacle in Battle Creek, Michigan, the city where Adventists officially incorporated.

In his sermon Wilson emphasized that they "should have been home by now," and asked why they should celebrate any more

anniversaries when "we could be in heaven". He further asked the members if they had been "as faithful to God's commands and counsels as they might have been."

Moreover, Wilson reminded the congregation that God had called them to a unique message and mission, and he asked them how long they, like unfaithful Israel, would keep breaking their promises to God.

After chiding members for failing to be faithful in carrying out the work of declaring the Adventist gospel—the Three Angels'



Messages—to the whole world so the end could come, he challenged them to proclaim those messages, to “reap the results from The Great Controversy Project”, and to commit to enter New York and other cities with their new “mission to the Cities” project. Moreover, he reminded them that members should be utilizing fully the “right arm of the Gospel,” the organization’s comprehensive health message.

Wilson reminded his flock that the Seventh-day Adventist church is “uniquely intended for this movement”, and its special message will not pass to another group. “You and I are part of the final church God has prepared.”

Cause of the guilt

We all learned the story that laid the foundation for Wilson’s challenge: William Miller predicted that Jesus would return to earth in 1843. When that date failed to produce the second coming, the Millerites recalculated and produced a new date: October 22, 1844. Many of the Millerites lost their crops and sold their household goods. They believed that they would be in heaven when the sun rose on October 23, and they let everything go.

Many of those disappointed Millerites repented and returned to their churches. There were a few, however, who refused to believe they could have been wrong in spite of Jesus’ clear statements that no one could know the day nor the hour of His return (Mk. 13:32-37). They persisted in trying

to find a way to explain that October 22, 1844, was a valid date, and they came up with what the late Walter Martin termed “a poor face-saving technique” to explain its significance: the investigative judgment.

Ellen White’s visions confirmed the investigative judgment scenario, and the founding Adventists led by James White and Joseph Bates, with Ellen White giving prophetic guidance to them as they tried to understand Scripture, pounded out the framework of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. In May, 1863, in Battle Creek, Michigan, they formally incorporated as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

After the organization’s formal incorporation, Ellen White continued to deliver testimonies to the Adventist flock reminding them that if they had done their duty, Jesus would have returned long before. Ted Wilson’s chiding this spring is not simply his own idea. He is delivering the message Ellen White left as her legacy to Adventists.

For example, She wrote in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 633-34, “By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord’s return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God...Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.”

In 1900 she put guilt-inducing pressure on her flock with these words: “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be



perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69).

Three years later she wrote in the *General Conference Bulletin*, dated March 30, 1903, “I know that if the people of God had preserved a living connection with Him, if they had obeyed His Word, they would today be in the heavenly Canaan.”

The core of Adventist guilt, however, is built on the unbiblical idea that we humans help to usher in Christ’s return. In reality, that day is already fixed. Jesus stated clearly that it is a day known only to the Father (Mk. 13:32), but it is “that day”, the “Day of the Lord” of which the prophets and apostles spoke throughout both the Old and the New Testaments. We cannot hurry or hinder the Lord.

Adventism’s response

Ted Wilson is doing exactly what Ellen White would have wanted him to do. He is organizing a multi-faceted evangelistic plan that incorporates the whole Adventist “world church”. He is enlisting their energy first to blanket the world with 166,600,000 copies of the book which, Wilson is fond of reminding his flock, Ellen White most wanted Adventists to distribute: *The Great Controversy*. The year 2012, therefore, was designated “the year of the Great Controversy”. This book, translated into all the major world languages, edited, and often retitled *The Great Hope*, was mailed or otherwise delivered by local churches, conferences, and individuals to non-members around the world.

The distribution of Ellen White’s flagship book paved the way for the 2013 initiative: NY13. This initiative launches a worldwide program which will be pursued over the next several years. NY13 includes more than 160 evangelistic outreach meetings in New York City. Concurrently, the Adventist organization held an International Field School of Evangelism at the Luso Brazilian Adventist Church in Corona, New York, during June.

According to a news story released on June 18, 2013, by the Adventist News Network (ANN), “The NY13 initiative is the first in the ‘Mission to the Cities’ campaign, which was unveiled in 2011 by Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson. This year’s outreach meetings and training in New York City are the basis for future outreach campaigns worldwide.”

According to Robert Costa, associate secretary of the Adventist Church’s Ministerial Association and the coordinator of this program, “We’re learning how to reach people in cities in ways that are sensitive to their cultural context. The goal is to equip leaders with tools to launch comprehensive evangelism initiatives in their own territories.”

This urban evangelism includes “several months of community service and involvement by church members, as well as follow-up work.” In fact, the evangelism meetings currently ongoing in New York are following the plan taught in the Field School; the meetings follow “months of several comprehensive outreach events, including prayer ministries, community service and health education events,” says the ANN press release.

Jerry Page, secretary of the Adventist’s Ministerial Association, said this “is a marathon of compassion that must

have an ongoing and sustained presence in the cities, and must continue beyond 2013.”

Implications

As they commemorate their 150th anniversary, Seventh-day Adventists are confronted by their corporate failure to complete their mission reiterated over and over by their prophet Ellen White: to finish the work so Jesus can come.

As a true Adventist, Ted Wilson is consistent in scolding his flock for still being here to celebrate 150 years of existence. He knows that Adventists are losing their sense of urgency; they’re beginning to question when or if Jesus’ soon return will happen. So he’s reminding them what “inspiration” has told them: Jesus will return. There will be no other last day remnant church or message. Adventism is the new Israel. They have disobeyed and are still wandering in the figurative wilderness, but the day is coming when the Sunday law will be passed, and the Adventists will finally be silenced by religious persecution.

Wilson’s message is urgent. Adventists should feel embarrassed by their corporate failure to finish the work. Jesus has not yet returned because they, Seventh-day Adventists, have failed to preach the Three Angels’ Messages to all the world and they have thus far failed to reproduce the character of Christ—perfect law-keeping—so Jesus can return.

Wilson assures his flock that the General Conference itself will not be “decentralized, neutralized, or sidelined”—in spite of many Adventists’ deviation from proclaiming historic Adventism. He will not let them off the hook; they have one reason to exist: to finish the work so Jesus will come back. They have prevented His return, and only they can make it happen. Ellen White summed up this Adventist dilemma in 1909 when she wrote, “If every soldier of Christ had done his duty, if every watchman on the walls of Zion had given the trumpet a certain sound, the world might ere this have heard the message of warning. But the work is years behind. While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march upon us” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 29).

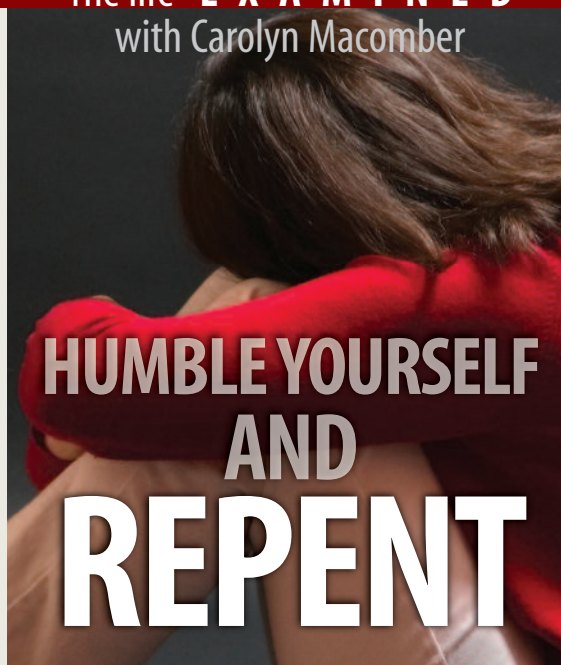
The groundbreaking NY13 initiative is just a harbinger of what the Adventist organization plans for the next few years. They are taking their evangelism programs and their evangelism field schools on the road. They are raising up a generation of lay people who will be taught how to enter their communities with health screenings, vegetarian cooking schools, and various community service projects as means of recruiting people to come to the meetings where they will hear and receive Adventist “truth”.

Adventism is turning its 150th commemoration of its corporate failure to achieve its mission into the launch of a worldwide initiative to make more members. No matter what progressive Adventists may say, nothing has changed. Adventism is still the self-proclaimed remnant church of Bible prophecy, and Ellen White is still at the helm.

Ted Wilson is doing exactly what she would have wanted. †

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HUMBLE YOURSELF AND REPENT

In this 1919 conference it was determined that the Seventh-day Adventist organization would not humble itself and admit the theological problems of Ellen G. White to their constituents.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:6-7). This text leads with a command to humble oneself. My problem is I do not like the process of humbling myself, especially when I have to admit that I am wrong. Furthermore, if I’m to be perfectly honest, I hate being wrong, because it hurts my pride—and pride is a beast that does not die easily. Humility is difficult.

If I look at pride closely it includes the following things: self-importance, self-love, self-adulation, self-admiration, self-regard, conceit, vanity, and big-headedness. Ouch!!! I believe pride can also include a certain amount of self-deceit. In other words, I can rationalize away my guilt: it was really someone else’s fault, or a circumstance out of my control caused me to be wrong or stay stuck. Pride often gets me into trouble. Humility often brings me out of trouble.

An example of this process of humility was admitting I had followed a false gospel and a false prophet. I had been a commissioned associate pastor of the Adventist Church. I had baptized people into false doctrines. I was wrong. I was humbled. One of the most difficult things I have had to do was admit my error and turn away from the Adventist Church.

This humbling experience was excruciatingly painful and set into motion other painful experiences. But the pain has brought much gain, and the gain is hard to articulate. I have a deep-seated joy in the realization that I am secure in Christ forever and ever.

I am reminded that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had a golden opportunity to humble itself and repent in 1919. At the 1919 Bible Conference, key Adventist leaders convened to discuss many topics but particularly whether Ellen G. White was a true prophet of God with verbal inspiration. The minutes to this conference were sealed for 50 years but were finally made public. These minutes are extremely lengthy, but telling. You can read the official transcript for yourself here: www.docs.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?q=documents.asp&CatID=19&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True or through another site here: www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/1919bc/

In this 1919 conference it was determined that the Seventh-day Adventist organization would not humble itself and admit the theological problems of Ellen G. White to their constituents. Instead, it was determined not to disclose the clear evidence that E.G. White was a false prophet and was not inspired by God. The minutes mention that leaders were afraid

that if the truth were known, members of the Adventist church would “lose their faith”. These minutes were sealed for 50 years and unknown to the public.

What might have happened if the truth had been told forthrightly by the leaders of the Adventist organization in 1919? Would that religion be “celebrating” its 150th organizational anniversary? Would thousands of constituents continue to read Ellen G. White as if she were inspired by God? Would hundreds of Seventh-day Adventists have died believing they had the truth, but dying without the saving knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ? What would have happened if key leaders had humbled themselves and repented of their error?

Before God, we have to ask ourselves some hard questions. How will we humble ourselves when truth is revealed and a decision must be made? Will we humble ourselves in truth or continue in pride? Are we willing to humble ourselves in repentance whatever the situation or circumstance may be?

Scripture says, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you” (Jas. 4:8-10).

Humbling ourselves before the Lord is difficult, but the Lord promises that He will exalt us in time. He asks us to have the courage to humble ourselves in repentance whatever our situations, relationships, or circumstances, and sooner or later we all have to ask ourselves the same question: will I humble myself before God, or will I continue to live in pride?

The pain in the humbling is worth the gain. †

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.



ARE YOU LED BY THE LESSER LIGHT OR SOLA SCRIPTURA?

STEPHEN PITCHER

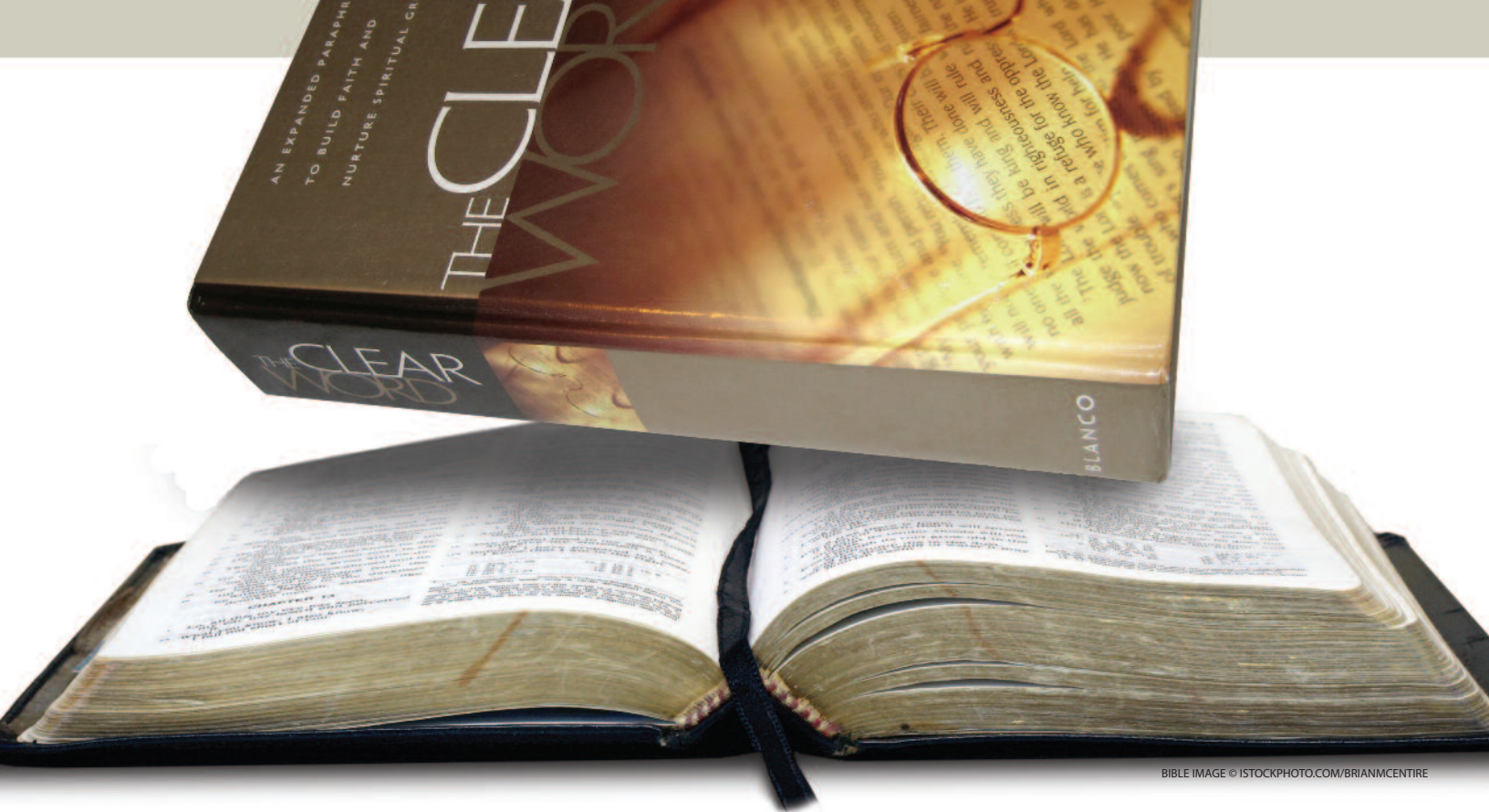
Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from a new book by Stephen Pitcher on *The Clear Word*, a paraphrase of the Bible by Jack Blanco, which is being prepared for publication. In this article Stephen shows how the Adventist Fundamental Belief concerning the gift of prophecy as it relates to Ellen White compromises its Fundamental Belief concerning the sufficiency of Scripture. This compromise grows out of Adventism's unique belief in the nature of inspiration, and ultimately, Adventism uses Ellen White as an inspired source of truth. Because of Adventism's belief in the authority of Ellen White's revelations, her writings are, in practice, the interpreter of Scripture.

The way a church understands and uses the Bible reveals whether or not that group uses Scripture as its sole foundation for doctrine, for practice, and for its worldview. A cursory reading of the first Fundamental Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church might suggest that Adventism views Scripture much as many evangelicals do:

1. The Holy Scriptures: The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.¹

A casual reader would assume that Adventism uses the Bible and the Bible alone as its sole source of authority. A closer look at the first fundamental belief, however, reveals that Adventism does not hold the Bible to be inerrant, without error in the original manuscripts. Moreover, as we examine passages from *The Clear Word* (TCW) that address certain beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and compare those with the same passages from the *English Standard Version* (ESV), we will see that the Old and New Testaments are not the only sources from which Adventism obtains its doctrines.

The concealed truth is that within Adventism, the position of the Bible as stated in Fundamental Belief #1 is compromised by Fundamental Belief #18 which describes Adventism's unique understanding of the "gift of prophecy". Although the first Adventist fundamental belief states that the Bible is "infallible" and the "authoritative revealer of doctrines", its eighteenth fundamental belief clearly states that Adventist prophet Ellen White is "a continuing and authoritative source of truth". The statement reads:



BIBLE IMAGE © ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/BRIANMCENTIRE

18. The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.²

Notice that Ellen White's gift of prophecy is an "identifying mark of the remnant church", the self-proclaimed identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In addition, it is Ellen White's writings that state the "Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested." In other words, the Adventist organization relies on Ellen White's authority to use Scripture for testing "all teaching and experience." Thus, Fundamental Belief #18 trumps Fundamental Belief #1; Scripture is not the foundation of truth in Adventism.

Additionally, Ellen White herself adapted Hebrews 1:1-2, which identifies the Lord Jesus as the final and full revelation of God to mankind, to describe her own revelations. Here is Hebrews 1:1-2a:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...

Now, compare Hebrews 1:1-2 with Ellen White's description of her own "testimonies". Significantly, this statement is quoted from her series of books entitled *Testimonies For the Church*:

In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue. [Vol. 4, pp. 147, 148 (1876).]

The Lord has seen fit to give me a view of the needs and errors of His people. Painful though it has been to me, I have faithfully set before the offenders their faults and the means of remedying them.

...Thus has the Spirit of God pronounced warnings and judgments, withholding not, however, the sweet promise of mercy...³

TCW: clarifying or confusing?

TCW is a paraphrase which incorporates Ellen White's teachings into the words of Scripture. If, as the publisher of TCW says, this paraphrase makes Scripture's meaning more transparent, it should not be difficult to test this premise by comparing its words with those of an accepted translation. Upon looking, however, one finds that the text of TCW confuses otherwise simple and clear statements of Scripture. In fact, instead of clarifying Scripture, TCW reveals that Adventist doctrine depends upon the testimonies of Ellen White.

Because TCW incorporates the extra-biblical ideas of the prophet Ellen White, we will look first at how it handles Revelation 22:18 which prohibits adding or subtracting anything from God's word.

Revelation 22:18

The Easy English Clear Word and The Clear Word for Kids

I, John, the apostle, warn everyone who reads this book not to change these prophecies. If they do, the plagues of this book will fall on them.

The Clear Word

I, John, warn everyone who reads or hears the prophetic words in this book not to add anything contrary to what is written. If they do, God's seven last plagues will certainly fall on them.

English Standard Version

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.

In other words, the Adventist organization relies on Ellen White’s authority to use Scripture for testing “all teaching and experience.” Thus, Fundamental Belief #18 trumps Fundamental Belief #1; Scripture is not the foundation of truth in Adventism.

The verse from TCW specifically allows additions to Scripture as long as those additions are not contrary to what is already written. This altered rendering allows the author to manipulate the biblical text however he wishes in order to support Adventist doctrine. The author, in fact, becomes the final authority on what the text says rather than allowing the text itself to remain the standard. Blanco knew that incorporating Ellen White’s great controversy worldview into Scripture would add to the original text, so he inserted the “anything contrary” phrase to justify his additions. It is impossible to compare this TCW paraphrase with the same verse from the Bible without seeing that the paraphrased version is condemned.

Importantly, *The Easy English Clear Word* (TEECW) and *The Clear Word for Kids* (TCWFK) do not even warn against “adding” to Scripture. They only warn readers not to “change” the prophecies. Unsuspecting Adventist children or adults for whom English is a second language would have no idea that the text of their version of TCW has been changed; it would agree with the Adventist worldview which they had learned from the beginning.

There is one other significant passage in TEECW and TCWFK related to altering the words of Scripture. Notice the following comparison of Revelation 22:19:

Revelation 22:19

The Easy English Clear Word and The Clear Word for Kids

If anyone dismisses part of this book with its prophecies as not being important, God will take away his right to the city and to the tree of life I have written about.

English Standard Version

...and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

In this verse Blanco removes the warning about taking away words and replaces it with “If anyone dismisses ...” This change justifies Blanco’s removal of substantial material from the Bible to create his “simplified paraphrases”, (*The Easy English Clear Word*

and *The Clear Word for Kids*.) He can, therefore, argue that his simplifications do not dismiss any of the meanings of the Scriptural passages.

The Adventist Trinity

For examples of Blanco’s scriptural changes for the support of Adventist doctrine, let’s begin in Genesis where he describes a physical, non-trinitarian deity.

Genesis 1:26-27

The Easy English Clear Word and The Clear Word for Kids

Then God said to His Son, “Let us make people who look like Us, and put them in charge of all the animals and fish and birds.” So God created a man and a woman.

The Clear Word

But this was not the end of His work for that day. Next He said to His Son, “Now let us make beings who look like us and can reflect our thinking and our personality. Let’s give them the responsibility of ruling over and caring for the fish, the birds and the animals we created.” So they created two human beings, a male and a female, equal but with different functions to reflect the unity of the Godhead.

English Standard Version

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God is spirit (Jn. 4:24), and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God—one Being. Understanding this fact, we can understand that the “image” in which man is made is spiritual, not physical. Blanco’s rendering, however, indicates that human beings “look like” the Father and Son, as though they have physical characteristics. Moreover, Blanco separates God from the Son, thus eliminating the unity of the Trinity—but he doesn’t stop there. Since Blanco adds “His Son”, we would expect him similarly to name the Spirit, but he does not. Thus, in the first chapter of Genesis, Blanco reveals his anti-trinitarian bias derived from Adventism’s founders.

Early Adventism was anti-trinitarian, and most of the founders taught that the Spirit was not a person but a force. Moreover, early Adventism also taught that, before the incarnation, the Son and the Father each had a body like ours and passions. For example, James White wrote:

The way spiritualizers this way have disposed of or denied the only Lord God and Lord Jesus Christ is first using the old unscriptural trinitarian creed, viz, that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, though they have not one passage to support it, while we have plain scripture testimony in abundance that he is the Son of the eternal God. Then they dispense of Jesus; secondly, by quoting John 4:24. God is a spirit, and as they assert, nothing but a spirit, the Holy Ghost, which dwells in a Christian. Thus

they dispose of the Almighty God, while I can and will show from two texts of the Bible that they both exist with body and parts... The ancient of days, or God, has a head, and hair on his head like the pure wool.⁴

Ellen White also denied the trinitarian creed. Adventist scholars Whidden, Moon, and Reeve wrote this in their book *The Trinity*:

It is possible that when her earlier visions contradicted some aspects of her Methodist upbringing (the creed that said God had neither body nor parts), she might have put the rest of her Methodist Trinity views “on the shelf,” so to speak ...⁵

Ellen White evidently agreed with her husband that Christ and the Father were “two distinct, literal, tangible persons,” but we have no record ... of her explicitly criticizing any Trinitarian view as did her husband.⁶

These foundational beliefs still color the Adventist understanding of God, and in the first chapter of Genesis, TCW presents us with a physical, bitheistic Godhead, a view which both reflects historic Adventism and allows Adventists to hold non-trinitarian or tritheistic positions today.

The fall

Just two chapters in from the twisting of God’s identity into a physical bitheism, Blanco seriously alters the details of our first parents’ sin. Blanco draws from the writings of Ellen G. White (EGW) to change and expand a text from Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:6

The Easy English Clear Word and The Clear Word for Kids

Instead of running back to her husband, Eve lingered at the tree. The fruit looked delicious! Then she touched it and nothing happened. So she took a bite. Excited, she ran to tell her husband. From this, Adam knew that Eve would die, so he took the fruit and ate it to die with her.

The Clear Word

As Eve watched the serpent eat the delicious fruit, she suddenly felt a strong urge to taste it too. She reached out and touched the fruit and nothing happened. Then she picked it, took a bite and instantly felt a surge of energy. Excited, she took more fruit and ran to find her husband. When Adam saw her, he sensed what she had done. But in the blush of her excitement, she looked more beautiful than ever. He couldn’t bear the thought of living without her, so he took the fruit and ate it also.

English Standard Version

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

It doesn’t take an expert to identify the amount of addition to the Bible that has been done in this passage. One of the most obvious changes is Blanco’s moving of Adam from being “with her” to being somewhere away from Eve. Where did Blanco obtain those details and the authority to include them in TCW? The writings

of Ellen G. White, prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are the source of Blanco’s rendering:

She then plucked for herself of the fruit and ate, and imagined she felt the quickening power of a new and elevated existence as the result of the exhilarating influence of the forbidden fruit. She was in a strange and unnatural excitement as she sought her husband, with her hands filled with the forbidden fruit. She related to him the wise discourse of the serpent, and wished to conduct him at once to the tree of knowledge. She told him she had eaten of the fruit, and instead of her feeling any sense of death, she realized a pleasing, exhilarating influence. As soon as Eve had disobeyed, she became a powerful medium through which to occasion the fall of her husband.

I saw a sadness come over the countenance of Adam. He appeared afraid and astonished. A struggle appeared to be going on in his mind. He told Eve he was quite certain that this was the foe that they had been warned against; and if so, that she must die. She assured him she felt no ill effects, but rather a very pleasant influence, and entreated him to eat.⁷

Blanco’s Ellen White-inspired expansion takes a passage of 55 words in the ESV and expands it to 95 words in TCW. This is not a clarification of the passage. Rather, White/Blanco have removed Adam from the scene, have glorified sin by describing Eve exuding a compelling excitement, and have suggested that Adam was vulnerable to lust and co-dependence as he succumbed to his seductive wife. TCW tells a completely different story from the Bible.

Adventism’s central pillar

Blanco’s interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is one of TCW’s most egregious additions to Scripture. This is the proof-text for the investigative judgment, Adventism’s central pillar of doctrine. This passage in all translations of Scripture give no hint of the convoluted details Adventism imposes on the text. Blanco, however, writes Adventism into the verse:

Daniel 8:14

The Clear Word

He answered, “After two thousand, three hundred prophetic days (which represent actual years), God will restore the truth about the heavenly sanctuary to its rightful place. Then the process of judgment will begin of which the yearly cleansing of the earthly Sanctuary was a type, and God will vindicate His people.”

English Standard Version

And he said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.”

One would need to attend an Adventist prophecy seminar in order to unpack the words in this expanded “paraphrase” of Daniel 8:14. Again, Blanco has taken a simple, albeit somewhat cryptic, statement and expanded it to include the framework of the investigative judgment. For Adventists reading TCW, moreover, this expansion would likely give them a sense of relief because it would seem that their most confusing doctrine actually has scriptural support. The Bible, however, would increase cognitive dissonance that

Again, Blanco has taken a simple, albeit somewhat cryptic, statement and expanded it to include the framework of the investigative judgment.

could eventually drive one to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

Adventism and Inspiration

Jack Blanco was able to write Adventist doctrine into TCW because of Adventism's doctrine of inspiration. Adventists do not endorse the verbal inspiration of the Bible because Adventism teaches that Ellen G. White was inspired in exactly the same way as were the Bible writers: the Lord gave thoughts and ideas to the authors who then used their own skills to generate the words they used to explain those thoughts and ideas. Thus, Adventism can continue to promote the Spirit of Prophecy as being inspired just as was the Bible. Roger Coon from The White Estate explains it this way:

What, then, is the position of the denomination with regard to the proper relationship between the writings of Mrs. White and sacred Scripture? As I understand it, we hold that Ellen G. White was inspired in the same manner and to the identical degree as were the prophets of the Bible; but—and this will be paradoxical to some—we do not make of her writings a second Bible, or even an addition to the sacred canon of God's Word.⁸

This explanation is double-speak. Adventists live with cognitive dissonance because they are told that Ellen White's writings are not on the level of Scripture. At the same time, they are also told that the Spirit of Prophecy is inspired in the same manner and to the same degree as Scripture. Both of these claims cannot be true.

This double-speak is compounded by the fact that official Adventist statements do not reveal the way Ellen White's writings are actually used within Adventism.

To further understand Adventism's claims, let's take a look at how the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of Seventh-day Adventism and Ellen White explain inspiration. First, here is White's classical statement:

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.⁹

The BRI endorses White's revelation:

According to her, God addresses the totality of the person and not only one aspect of the personality of the prophets, e.g. the verbal skills of the prophets. Second, what she is describing is the mysterious process through which the divine message or word is "incarnated" into the human condition. The divine mind, she says, is diffused. And by that she means that the divine mind and will are

combined with the human mind and will in such a way that what is expressed by the human instrument—"the utterances of the man"—are "the word of God."¹⁰

George Knight, retired Adventist historian and former professor at Andrews Theological Seminary, writes the following in his book, *Reading Ellen White*:

The same kind of factual errors can be discovered in Ellen White's writings as are found in the Bible. The writings of God's prophets are infallible as a guide to salvation, but they are not inerrant or without error. Part of the lesson is that we need to read for the central lessons of Scripture and Ellen White rather than the details.¹¹

Jack Blanco agrees with the above ideas. In 1993 he wrote an article for the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. There he states,

The words of the Bible are not inspired, but the men who wrote them were.¹²

The Christian position

In contrast to Adventism, evangelical Christianity endorses both the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Following are a few statements on biblical inerrancy from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, created in 1978.

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.¹³

Following the "Short Statement" are 19 affirmations and denials which summarize the evangelical understanding of inspired Scripture. Major points include that God used human language to reveal His will, and God's intention has not been thwarted or corrupted through the changes of language.

Moreover, God the Holy Spirit inspired human writers and gave them His Word. While revelation is a mystery, we do not believe that it is merely human insight nor "heightened states of consciousness of any kind." God did not override human personalities while He gave them the words He chose.

Furthermore, inspiration guarantees that there is no distortion of falsehood in the words of Scripture. Even though the writers are human, God is in charge of the words He gave. Finally, because God inspired Scripture, it is infallible and inerrant. It cannot lead a person astray, and there are no false statements. The Bible cannot be infallible and errant at the same time. While infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, they cannot be separated.¹⁴

Ellen White's real role

If the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are equally inspired by God, then they must be, by nature, of equal value to the reader. The Adventist organization verbally denies what it actually confirms in practice. Ellen White is used to answer questions of faith and practice, to provide counsel for those facing difficulties, and is used to end disagreements, i.e., where Ellen White speaks on a topic, that is the final word. No matter what the Bible says, in practice Ellen White is both the source and end of truth for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

At the 56th General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists a “statement of confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy” was passed. It specifically states how Ellen G. White is to be used.

We, the delegates assembled in Utrecht for the fifty-sixth session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists ... recommend ...

1) That as a church we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to apply to our lives more fully the inspired counsel contained in the writings of Ellen G. White, and

2) That we make increased efforts to publish and circulate these writings throughout the world.

Within Adventism, Ellen White is more than just a Christian writer like any other devotional author. Rather, her words hold authority over the beliefs and practices of the

Seventh-day Adventist organization. As affirmed in Fundamental Belief #18, “Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.” This statement sounds eerily like 2 Timothy 3:16; “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” In reality, Ellen White’s writings hold the same authority for a Seventh-day Adventist as does the Bible for the Christian.

Jack Blanco demonstrated the Adventist dependence upon Ellen White when he incorporated her teachings directly into the Adventist paraphrase of Scripture, *The Clear Word*. The Adventist organization has further endorsed its dependence upon her writings by marketing TCW in its Adventist Book Centers and on its websites as a Bible, advertising it as a viable paraphrase useful for devotional reading.

Conclusion

Jack Blanco chose to ignore the warning of Revelation 22:18 when he wrote *The Clear Word*. If he did not believe that Ellen White’s writings were God-inspired and valid for interpreting Scripture, He would not have dared to change that verse—and countless other passages throughout the Bible—so that his paraphrase agrees with Seventh-day Adventism and with Ellen G. White.

If there is no difference in manner or degree of inspiration between the Bible writers and Ellen White, it doesn’t matter what the official Adventist position states about the status of her works. In practice, Adventism uses her writings as if they are on a par with Scripture. The writings of Ellen White are a “continuing and authoritative source of truth” and, therefore, must be consulted when seeking answers about the faith and practice of Adventist life. †

Endnotes

¹ Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd Ed., 2005, p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³ White, Ellen G., *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, (1882-1889), p. 661. Ellipses in original. [The bracketed note is in the original and is referring to volume 4 of this series.] From the EGW Comprehensive Research Edition CD ROM, E. G. White Estate, 2008.

⁴ White, James, *The Day-Star*, Jan. 24, 1846, p. 1 (Capitalization as in the original.)

⁵ Whidden, Woodrow; Moon, Jerry; Reeve John W., *The Trinity*, Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2002, p. 211.

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⁷ White, Ellen G., *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 38-39.

⁸ Coon, Roger W., from the website, <http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/rev-insp.html#part3>, emphasis in original, online as of 6/4/13.

⁹ *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 21 (Manuscript 24, 1886; written in Europe in 1886).

¹⁰ From the Adventist Biblical Research website – <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible/issues-revelation-and-inspiration>, online as of 6/4/13.

¹¹ Knight, George R., *Reading Ellen White*, copyright © 1997 by Review and Herald® Publishing Association, p. 111.

¹² Blanco, Jack J., “Faith and Theology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, April 2, 1993, p. 32.

¹³ “The 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” as contained in Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*, 1994, p. 1204.

¹⁴ “The 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” as contained in Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 1203-1207, 1994.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT

DALE RATZLAFF

In April we at Life Assurance Ministries attended a conference in Denver, Colorado, sponsored by Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR). As we attended breakout sessions and the three excellent plenary sessions, we appreciated the focus on the nature of truth: truth for the sake of truth; truth in establishing and evaluating world views; truth in comparing world religions, and testing the truth claims of the cults. The final plenary session was given by Dr. Douglas Groothuis, professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary and author of the recently published *Christian Apologetics—a Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*.¹ Yes, it is indeed a comprehensive work with some 752 pages, and some of the material in what follows I have gleaned from this wonderful and highly recommended work.

The nature of truth

• Truth must have meaning.

It [truth] must stake out a share of reality conceptually and be intelligible. For example, the statement “Green ideas sleep furiously” is neither true nor false, because it doesn’t advance any statement about anything. The statement may be grammatical, but is nonetheless, meaningless.”²

First, truth must have meaning. Facts which are self-authenticating can be claimed to be truth; for example, the statement “It is hot today” has meaning and can be easily evaluated. (Yes, it is 116 degrees as I write, a fact confirmed both by Google and by a thermometer in our back yard). Some claims of truth, however, are not as easily evaluated; for example, which world religion

is true? Muslims claim to follow the one true religion, and Christians claim to follow the one true religion. Both statements have meaning, so they both seem plausible. These statements, however, have contradictory meanings, so, because of the nature of truth, they cannot both be true. Many today, though, would disagree that spiritual or religious truth must be rationally testable, and they build their world views on subjective or cultural norms instead of on empirical evidence. This dilemma, therefore, leads us to the second necessary characteristic in the nature of truth: it must be able to be rationally tested.

• Truth must correspond to reality

Aristotle understood this principle when he wrote:

To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that is, or that is not, will say either what is true or what is false.³

For a statement to be true it must be factually accurate. A statement is not true just because we believe it to be true or want it to be true; belief and facts do not always correspond. For example, there were many homeowners who believed that their properties would be safe during the super storms that hit Mississippi and New Jersey last year, but their belief did not change reality. Belief or faith should be based on facts that can be reasonably established. Belief in belief, while it may have some placebo benefits—a positive, optimistic mental attitude is healthy—can sometimes be a road to foolishness and deception. Sometimes, it is true, facts are difficult to prove. For example,

TRUTH

some might say the statement, “Christ is coming again” does not correspond to reality because it is not (now) factual. Nevertheless, it is a factual statement based upon an abundance of supporting historical evidence confirming fulfilled Bible prophecies: Christ’s birth, His truthful ministry, Christ’s resurrection from the dead, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the destruction of Jerusalem. In other words, truth must correspond to reality based upon facts which can be reasonably provable. “Christ will either come again or He will not” is a factual statement. To choose one outcome over the other requires a logical argument based upon known facts.

• Truth cannot be self-contradictory.

The law of noncontradiction is the basis for all truth, not just some truth. This reality seems to be well-grounded in the human psyche from childhood on. The whole premise of cross-examination of a witness under oath springs from this law. In fact, this law corresponds to the working of God who does not contradict Himself and cannot deny Himself,⁴ and it often exposes our own shallow commitment to the truth.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 Jn. 1:6-8).

The law of noncontradiction is one of the most useful tools in evaluating truth claims made by political and Christian lead-

ers. As I write, the news is full of stories of political leaders who have contradicted themselves. Their truth claims are therefore undermined, and their credibility is diminished.

As Christians we accept *Sola Scriptura* as the foundational tenet of the Christian faith; based upon this foundation, therefore, the authority of Scripture becomes the plumb line for evaluating claims to truth. Jesus said, “Scripture cannot be broken,”⁵ and He quoted as authoritative statements from Deuteronomy and Daniel, the two books which higher critics deem to be the least historical. Therefore, when statements made by religious leaders contradict the clear teaching of God’s word, we *know* they are in error.

• Truth systems should be internally consistent.

A religion or denomination should only hold a system of beliefs that is internally consistent. This idea is sometimes called the coherence theory of truth. In other words, in expressing a particular world view, a religious system should not have to struggle with incompatible parts. It should answer coherently the questions of where we came from, why we are here, where we are going, and what we, if anything, need to do to improve our destiny now and hereafter. The coherence theory of truth, however, is not by itself an indicator of truth. Muslims, Buddhists and Christians may all claim to have a system of truth that is internally consistent and meets the coherence test. Yet these religions would disagree with each other, thus showing that while coherence should be a factor of truth, it is not the deciding factor.

Having briefly examined the nature of truth, we look now at some of the modern definitions of truth and evaluate how they fare when compared to the standards of meaning, testability, reality, non-contradiction, coherence, and *Sola Scriptura*.

The pragmatic theory of truth.

The pragmatic theory of truth is often called the “religion” of business. This theory is based on defining truth as what works. For example, the book *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill is often said to be the “bible” of success. In essence what it teaches is that what a person can conceive and believe, he can achieve—having a purpose, developing a plan, and persistently following that plan is the road to success. Thousands of business leaders have followed this plan to wealth. We should note that these principles lie very close to biblical truth with one big—huge—difference. As Christians our first purpose is to follow the will of God, our plan is direct-

define truth for themselves. Those old enough to look back at how things were in the 50s, for example, realize how our culture has changed. In those days we seldom locked our houses or car doors when we were away, and we usually stopped to help someone who had broken down along the road without fear of being robbed or sued. Most Americans held to the Judeo-Christian ethic. Truth and reality were connected. How things have changed!

Cocktail religion

Springing from the postmodern theory of “truth”, many have opted for what we might call cocktail religion. They may take a little of the golden rule from Christianity and a little yoga from Buddhism, explain the circumstances of life by karma, worship nature as the mother goddess, and seek some mystical, spiritual experience that works for them. Once a person has unhooked truth from reality, there is no way to evaluate truth.

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ed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth, and we are to focus our attention persistently on who we already are in Christ. Without God one can follow the pragmatic theory of truth to hell. What seems to work now may not, in the end, be ultimate truth.

The postmodern theory of “truth”

The postmodern theory of truth is the religion of liberalism and is rapidly sweeping our country like a plague. Our children are learning postmodernism from public school to the ivy league universities. And, sad to say, it is rapidly infiltrating the Christian church. Postmodernism is the result of political correctness gone wild. The postmodern theory of “truth” teaches that there is no objective standard for truth. Therefore, “truth” must be defined by the individual living in a community. If the community thinks abortion is O.K. then, it is O.K. If the community thinks gay marriage is a good thing, then that is “truth” for those who enter that relationship. The postmodern theory of truth has unhooked itself from the idea that truth must correspond to reality. Once people accept this theory of truth, however, they are free to

Shortcoming of postmodern, cocktail religion

Springing from the postmodern, cocktail understanding of truth is the idea that it is politically incorrect to judge or even to evaluate what another person believes. “Who are you to judge my religion?” Those who claim it is wrong to judge another’s moral standing or religious views, however, end up in a moral dilemma and are forced, ultimately, to make judgments. These judgments usually protect the postmodern’s beliefs and deny those who hold to absolute truth the right to make judgments. These judgments against those who believe in absolute truth, right, and wrong, reveal the error, foolishness, and terrible danger of postmodernism. For example, there is a growing disdain and even a hatred of Christianity in today’s society witnessed by incidents in classrooms against believing Christians and by disgusting “art” demonizing Christ. The reason for this negative judgment is that Christians believe in an objective moral standard of right and wrong which identifies sin based on scriptural truth.

Rational thinking can identify the foolishness of postmodern “truth” in relationship to moral judgment. For example, our society today says it is O.K. to kill a baby as long as it is not completely out of the mother’s birth canal, and the government

will protect the mother and pay the doctor to abort the unborn. However, a few seconds after the baby is born, killing it is a crime punishable by death, and the government will pay for attorneys to enforce this law.

Understanding the contemporary worldview of “truth” vs. the truth of Christianity

At the recent EMNR conference several of the speakers presented a visual description of the contemporary worldview of truth that made these concepts easy to grasp. Visualize a two story house representing a person’s interior life. The upper story represents the place where religion, spirituality, and subjective experience reside. The lower story is where objective facts and measurable physical reality occur. In postmodernism, the spiritual upper story is completely disconnected from the objective lower story. This disconnect allows people to say, for example, that a person born objectively male may not experience himself subjectively as male. He may thus identify his gender as “transgender” or “bisexual” or “gay”. His “personhood”, therefore, is determined by his subjective spiritual experience disconnected from objective, measurable physical reality. This postmodern disconnect between subjective experience and objective reality leaves people without any objective measure of truth and ultimately confused and anxious. Each person is free to decide individually what is “true” for him or her, not only in the realm of personal identity but also in every area of existence including relationships, behaviors, and religion.

Christianity, on the other hand, does not separate the subjective, spiritual areas of life from the objective and physical. Christians understand, for example, that living babies are born spiritually dead and must be brought to life spiritually (Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 1:13). The relationship between spiritual and physical has eternal consequences. Moreover, a person’s subjective spiritual experiences are integrated with one’s objective decisions and behaviors acted out in the body, and a person’s objective physical reality must both inform and be informed by his spiritual self. Furthermore, Christianity itself is comprised of spiritual reality—being authored by the one true God who is spirit (Jn. 4:24)—yet this spiritual reality is not unhooked or separated from provable objective facts. In fact, Christianity is the only world religion that is anchored in historical facts.

Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of

those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:12-21).

Christianity stands or falls on the historicity of the resurrection. Christianity is rational; it is linked to facts that can be reasonably proved. Consequently, we do not separate our spiritual life from our rational life because the historicity of Christianity demands that we allow its truths to permeate every aspect of our person and life. Moreover, the morals engendered by Christianity can be demonstrably proven to be good. The life results of going to church, living in a Christian home, marriage before children are born, integrity, and chastity have been shown over and over again by empirical studies to be superior values for all involved than are those which are driven subjectively.

Scripture and Truth

The concept of truth runs like an unbroken chain through the whole of Scripture. When Moses met with God on the heights of Sinai,

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Ex. 34:6).

Moses confirmed that “God is not a man that He should lie” (Num. 23:19). The wise proverb admonishes us to “Buy truth, and do not sell it” (Pro. 23:23).

In describing the experience of walking with Jesus, the disciple John states,

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14).

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

The Holy Spirit is defined as “the Spirit of truth” (Jn. 14:17). We are to worship the Father in Spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23). The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (Jn. 16:13).

God’s truth must be learned (Acts 17:11) and defended (1 Pet. 3:15-17, Jude 3). Believers living in error must be corrected in love (2 Cor. 10:3-5). When the truth of the gospel is compromised, it must be confronted openly (Gal. 2:5, 14).

The Gospel Prophet says,

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword.” Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isa. 1:18-20).

The eternal search for truth

While truth is rational and can be known, in this seemingly infinite universe there are depths of truth that we cannot fully comprehend that nevertheless reveal the fingerprints of Almighty God. The more we learn, the more we see an Intelligent Designer, and the more we realize that we only know an infinitesimal amount of the truth that is “out there”.

In the same way, as we continue to study Scripture guided by the Holy Spirit using all the mental powers of reason, language, and logic, we understand we have only scratched the surface of knowable truth. The truths of the gospel of John have been described as a pool of truth in which a child can swim without the fear of drowning, yet this pool of truth is so deep a theologian cannot touch the bottom.

Discipline needed for truth discovery

The Bible does not teach a lackadaisical attitude toward the discovery of truth. While natural revelation testifies about the existence of God,⁶ we are instructed to learn more about this God who created all. We are to seek Him and His truth.

...you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul (Deut. 4:29).

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who

has will be given more, and will have an abundance. But whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. For this reason I speak to them in parables: Although they see they do not see, and although they hear they do not hear nor do they understand. And concerning them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will listen carefully yet will never understand, you will look closely yet will never comprehend. For the heart of this people has become dull; they are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes, so that they would not see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But your eyes are blessed because they see, and your ears because they hear (Mt. 13:11-16 NET).

Paul also quotes from this Isaiah passage in the closing verses of Acts. The Jews wanted to know what Paul was teaching, so on a specific day, he spoke to them from morning to evening. Then we have this record:

Some were convinced by what he said, but others refused to believe. So they began to leave, unable to agree among themselves, after Paul made one last statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke

There are any number of reasons one could give for not following known truth: "I don't want to leave my friends." "If I leave my position, it will have negative financial consequences. I have a good reputation now, if I follow truth fully, I will be considered an enemy and lose all respect in my professional circle." Yes, there is a cost to following truth that many of our readers know, but the good news is that the reward is so much better there is no comparison!

asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened (Lk. 11:9-10).

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Pet. 2:2).

The writer of Hebrews urges us to leave the elementary teachings and press on to spiritual maturity.⁷ It would be good for us to move our focus from American Idol to the many scriptural passages which tell us who we are in Christ Jesus.

Hindrances to the discovery of truth

Scripture delineates three basic hindrances to the discovery of truth that have drastic eternal consequences. To identify these three hindrances, we will begin by looking at one of Jesus' hard statements to His disciples about the Pharisees. In the following passage, Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10 and Psalm 119:70:

He replied, "You have been given the opportunity to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but they have not. For whoever

rightly to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing, but will never understand, and you will keep on looking, but will never perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, so that they would not see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them."'

Therefore be advised that this salvation from God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen! (Acts 28:24-28 NET).

The wise man said this:

Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices (Pro. 1:28-31).

I am intentionally being redundant in quoting three references that teach nearly the same thing because I believe eternal destinies hang on the principles they teach. Many of the Jews of Christ's day turned their back on their Savior because of one or more of three hindrances to the discovery of truth. It is vitally important that we not fall into one of these three modes of thought that has the poten-

tial to blind our eyes, deafen our ears, and harden our hearts to the truth. So what are the three hindrances to the discovery of truth?

• **Refusing to follow known truth.**

There are any number of reasons one could give for not following known truth: “I don’t want to leave my friends.” “If I leave my position, it will have negative financial consequences. I have a good reputation now, if I follow truth fully, I will be considered an enemy and lose all respect in my professional circle.” Yes, there is a cost to following truth that many of our readers know, but the good news is that the reward is so much better there is no comparison!

• **Refusing to study and search out truth for oneself.**

I have a dear friend who says, “I know what I believe; I don’t want to study with you. I trust the church leaders to teach truth.” How many Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses could say the same thing? That is why we continually say, “Real truth can stand the test of investigation, and error cannot”. As noted above, we are admonished time and again in Scripture to study for ourselves. It is a good thing to examine every teaching that we hear against the words of Scripture.

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so (Act 17:11).

• **Refusing to accept truth because we don’t like it.**

There are many who refuse to accept truth because they don’t like it. However, likability is not a determining factor of truth. Truth must be weighed on different scales than our likes and dislikes. I don’t like the idea that some people will be eternally separated from God. However, because this fact is taught in Scripture, I must accept this as truth. Some may not like the idea that God makes sinners alive while they are still dead in sin, but He does. Some may not even believe in sin or in the fact that Jesus is the only way to the Father, but these remain important truths nevertheless.

The blessings of truth

The blessings of truth are many and real. I close with a few passages of Scripture which I pray will give you a thirst to discover truth for yourself.

Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day (Ps. 25:5).

You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me (Ps. 40:11).

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

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart (Pro. 3:3).

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17).

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God (Jn. 3:20-21).

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

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth (Jn. 17:17-19).

Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH...” (Eph. 6:14).

We conclude this short study on truth with words from the Gospel of John.

Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:37).

A few verses later Pilate insightfully—and unwittingly—answered his own question: “Behold, the Man!” (Jn. 19:5). †

Endnotes

¹ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics—A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, Downers Grove IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2010.

² Ibid. p. 123.

³ Ibid, p. 125, Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.7.

⁴ 2 Tim. 2:13.

⁵ Jn. 10:35.

⁶ Rom. 1:18-20.

⁷ Heb. 5:12-6:3.

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CAROLYN MACOMBER

JUSTICE

God's Forgotten Attribute

When we have been wronged or hurt we cry out for justice and restitution. It is a different story, though, when we are the ones that have caused hurt and pain. We then plead for mercy, grace, and forgiveness. A story from the life of David illustrates this dichotomy well as we explore one of the forgotten attributes of God: His justice.

Nathan the prophet had been sent by God to speak to David, the king of Israel (2 Sam. 12). Nathan started the conversation with a story about two men. One man was rich and the other was poor. The one that was rich had all he could possibly need including large numbers of sheep and cattle. The poor man had only one little ewe lamb. Scripture tells us that the poor man treated the lamb as if it were a daughter, allowing it to drink from his cup and eat his food (2 Sam. 12:3). Nathan continued to weave the story by telling David a traveler came to visit the rich man. Instead of the rich man taking from his own large flock, he took the one little ewe lamb from the poor man. The rich man killed the little ewe lamb to feed the traveler. David then cried out for justice in the midst of this story-telling,

“As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity” (2 Sam. 12: 5b-6).

Then the real-life story of David’s sin was brought to light. Nathan told David, “You are the man!”

The wrong David committed is brought before him: his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. Nathan further tells David, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.’”

David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”

And Nathan replied, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.” Then Nathan went to his house” (2 Sam. 12: 11-15).

Justice and mercy

There are many layers to this story. One layer involves justice, and another speaks of mercy and forgiveness. Before we unpack this story further, let’s take a look at our own culture and beliefs about justice and mercy. Currently, there is a swing in Christianity towards a God that lacks justice. Often I hear the phrase, “A loving God would never!” That sentence is often filled in with these words: “...send anyone to eternal torture in hell!” A prominent evangelical pastor, Rob Bell, wrote a book in 2011 called *Love Wins*. In the book he espouses a loving God Who would not send people to eternal torture in hell. Rob Bell is not alone in his thoughts. Some evangelicals struggle to talk about hell, and some are unsure of its existence. If you read the former Adventist forum (www.FormerAdventist.com) you will find this sentiment often from those coming out of Adventism. It is my belief that culture has deeply affected Christianity. It

seems that Christianity has swung from having an understanding of God’s attribute of justice to having an understanding of only God’s attributes of mercy and grace. And it is so much easier to talk about mercy and grace than to hold people accountable for their actions and to require restitution.

Unfortunately, not only does culture work against us in understanding the attributes of God, but so does our own sin-marred state (Rom. 7: 14-15, 18-25). When we accept Jesus as our Savior we are transferred spiritually from death to life, but our emotions and physical addictions often are left to be processed in the body of Christ (church) (Eph. 4:14-16). Therefore, when we think of God and try to put Him into our frame of reference, we do Him an injustice because we are placing a holy, righteous God into our still-marred human understanding. We really can’t say, “A loving God would never ...”, because our understanding of love is still incomplete. Not until our final glorification when we are changed and clothed with the imperishable (1 Cor. 15:35-54) will our minds fully begin to grasp an understanding of unconditional love.

Neither culture nor human understanding can fully capture and explain the attributes of God. In fact, Scripture is the only standard from which to learn and to teach Who God is and Who He is not. Scripture is inerrant and fully inspired by God. When we submit our understanding to the God-breathed words of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:15-17) and to the instruction of its Author, the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26), then we begin to walk in the truth of God’s amazing attributes.

Let us return now to the story in God’s Word that speaks of justice and mercy and forgiveness. When confronted by Nathan concerning His sin, David confessed and asked for forgiveness. Psalms 51 is David’s penitent psalm. Ten times in this Psalm David requests forgiveness with words such as: have mercy; blot out my transgression; wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin; cleanse me with hyssop; wash me; blot out all my iniquity; create in me a pure heart; renew a steadfast spirit within me; deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed.

Immediately after David’s confession, Nathan told him, “The Lord has taken away your sin” (2 Sam. 12:13). David was forgiven. God demonstrated His mercy on David by not killing David for the premeditated murder of Uriah.

David took full responsibility for his sin and asked that his relationship with the Lord be restored. David cried out, “Do not cast me from Your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me” (Ps. 51:11-12). David repented, completely broken over what he had done. He took responsibility for his sin, and God restored the relationship. David, however, suffered the consequences of his actions.

Surprisingly, David, in a roundabout way pronounced His own judgement upon his sin. David told Nathan that the man in Nathan’s story should “pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

Nathan explained the consequences for David’s actions: “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the Lord says: ‘Out of your own

household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.' But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die" (2 Sam. 12:10-12, 14).

The justice meted out to David for his murder of Uriah and his adultery with Bathsheba was the death of David's four sons. The baby born to Bathsheba did die; Amnon (David's eldest son) was murdered by Absalom (also David's son); Absalom was killed by Joab (David's army captain); Adonijah was slain by a command from Solomon (David's other son by Bathsheba). David was forgiven for his sin, but he suffered greatly from the consequences of his sin. Though God had mercy on David and forgave him and restored their relationship; God also brought justice upon him.

We may wonder at the justice God brought upon David. Some may think God was too harsh because a baby (the baby born from the adulterous affair) died. Some might ask, "Why did the baby die for David's sin?" When an imperfect human asks a question such as this, he or she becomes the judge of a Holy and Omniscient God. Imperfect humans can't comprehend perfect justice because imperfect humans can't fully comprehend unconditional love. God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are beyond our thoughts (Is. 55:8).

Moses declared God's attribute of justice perfect before he died. "I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Deut. 32:3-4). Only the Lord carries within Himself the perfect match of 100% justice and 100% mercy.

God's perfect combination of justice and mercy is displayed in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. God's justice for sin was proclaimed back in the Garden of Eden. God declared that Adam and Eve would die if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve did eat the fruit which God had forbidden them not to eat, and immediately they were spiritually cut off from God (they died spiritually). We see this death demonstrated by their actions of hiding from God when He came to them in the garden (Gen. 3:9-10). There were deep consequences for Adam and Eve's sin. Some of those consequences we experience today (Gen. 3:14-19). The Lord had declared death to Adam and Eve if they ate of the fruit, and He had to follow through with His Word. God then shared how His justice would take place (Gen. 3:15). He would send His One and Only Son Who would crush the serpent's head, but He had to pay for the death and separation from God that Adam and Eve's sin required. Justice would be served.

God's Son, Jesus Christ, was the only One Who could pay the debt that justice required. God's perfect justice would be meted out on His One and Only Son. Christ felt separation

Attention *Proclamation!* supporters and prayer warriors

These days, talking about money for ministry is a sensitive issue because of the abundance of scams and false promises. However, many here have said that they want to know when there is a need, so I ask that you prayerfully consider the following.

Proclamation! magazine needs our financial and prayer support. It is not uncommon to see a slight set back in donations during the summer. This year, however, that set back came earlier than expected. Interestingly, this financial slump isn't because the need for the magazine is decreasing; in fact, the number of requests for magazines worldwide is coming in at a higher rate than ever. One of the many encouraging things about this increase in requests is that some are coming from outside of the United States where Seventh-day Adventism is progressing rapidly. It is important to remember that many of these places do not have the same access to the internet that we do. If the ministry ever needed to cease publishing hard copies of the magazine, these are the places that would suffer first. While the former Adventist population may be small, the ministry field is great, and the need is growing all the time.

The producers of *Proclamation!* are extremely dedicated to the printing of the magazine until God clearly says otherwise. Many people don't know that occasionally that commitment comes at the cost of their not taking a personal income—sometimes for months

at a time. This is again the case. This dynamic has served to strengthen their faith greatly as they have seen God provide for them as their Father and provide for the ministry.

I cannot help but think of Paul's words to the church at Corinth regarding their financial support for the Christians in Jerusalem:

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God" (2 Cor. 9:7-12).

If you wish to donate online, go to: LifeAssuranceMinistries.org (click "Online Donations" on the top right of the webpage). You may also call (520) 836-9790 and donate with your credit card, or you may mail a check to Life Assurance Ministries, PO Box 7776, Redlands, CA 92375.

I know we are not all in a position to give, but we can all pray. And please don't forget to thank Him for His continued faithfulness to lead in the endeavor to contend for the faith given once for all.



—Nikki Stevenson

from God on the cross when He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mt. 27:46). Jesus Christ died physically on a cross to complete the requirement of God’s justice.

Now the Lord asks only one thing from His created beings: belief in Christ’s death and resurrection (Jn. 5:24). This belief, however, is not merely a cognitive assent to what Jesus did. It is, rather, a belief grounded in the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8) which also comes from God. This faith is rooted and grounded in Christ alone so that no one can boast that they have contributed to God’s justice and their salvation. “The work of God is this: to believe in the One God has sent” (Jn. 6:29).

God has not left us to wonder if God’s justice (in the death and resurrection of His Son) was sufficient or complete. John, the disciple, writes, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:13, NIV). The penalty of death has been paid, and because justice required death (which Jesus fully paid) we will not have to experience it. We do not cease to exist at death as Adventists believe, but Scripture tells us that those who believe in Jesus will never die. Look at the beautiful promise Jesus spoke to Mary at the death of her brother, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (Jn. 11:25-26).

I need to ask you the same question, dear reader, “Do you believe this?” Do you believe in God’s perfect justice? Do you believe that God’s justice has already been met in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Have you made the decision of faith to believe in Jesus?

God’s justice is perfect, and so is His mercy. Recently I spoke with a woman about the Lord’s justice. I told her I looked forward to the final judgement of God and the time when sorrow would be no more. I excitedly told her I couldn’t wait! She solemnly shared with me that she could wait. She was unsure whether her children had truly taken the step of faith to believe and trust in Jesus’ death and resurrection. She didn’t want the Lord’s return and final judgement to come until her children were saved. My excitement became muted as I empathized with this mother who loved her children greatly.

Since that conversation I have had time to process her words, and this is what I’ve concluded. The God Who carries in His very Being 100% perfect justice also carries in His Being 100% perfect mercy and long-suffering. Matthew tells us that the Lord is like a good shepherd that searches for the one sheep that is not with His flock. “And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish” (Mt. 18:12-14; NIV).

Peter also assures us of the Lord’s perfect mercy in the middle of his writing on God’s final judgement. “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the

heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Pe. 3:9-10). Now I would probably tell my friend, “The Lord is 100% merciful and loves your children more than you can even begin to love them; His timing is perfect, too. We can both support each other as we trust His mercy and justice.”

In closing we can know that God’s justice is perfect in every way. Wayne Grudem in *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* says, “If indeed God is the final standard of righteousness, then there can be no standard outside of God by which we measure righteousness or justice. He himself is the final standard” (p. 95). Perfect justice lies in the hands of a Holy God.

“Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment. So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives.

“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the Lord (Is. 59:14-20).

We can trust God’s attribute of justice because it is administered with His great mercy! †

Note from Carolyn: I realize that this article does not begin to touch the aspect of justice, evil, and forgiveness. But if you desire a good previous article on evil and forgiveness, I would point you to a *Proclamation!* article by Gary Inrig entitled, “When there is no I’m sorry”. You can find it here: www.LifeassuranceMinistries.org/Proclamation2006_JanFeb.pdf.

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.

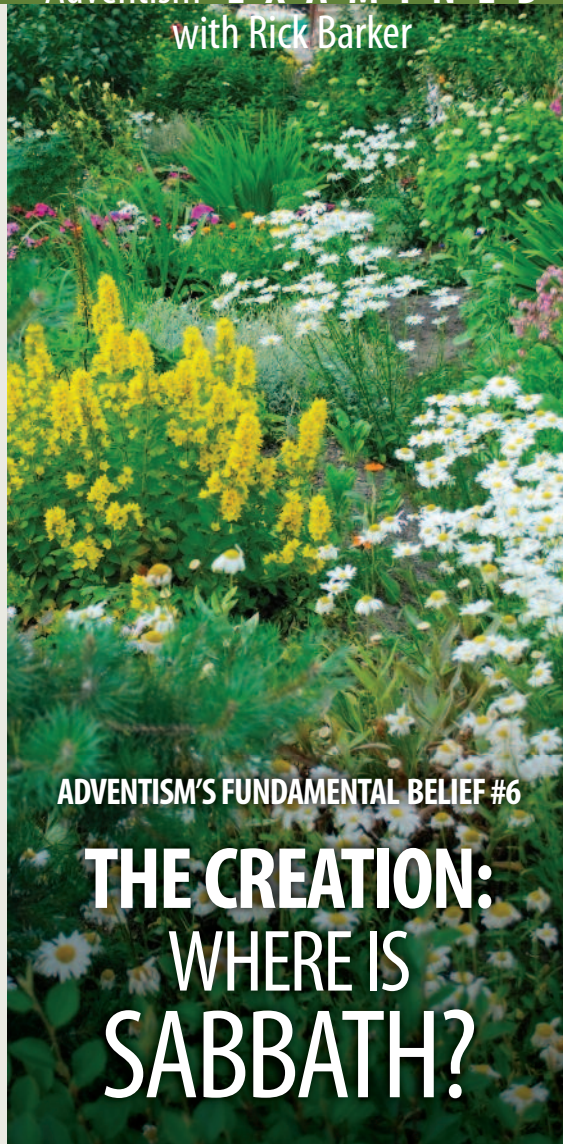


**Fundamental Belief #6.
Creation:**

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made “the heaven and the earth” and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God.

This belief statement remains close, but still does not exactly follow, the Scriptural account. For example the claim, “Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work”, goes beyond what Scripture says on the subject. It could accurately read, “At Sinai, God established the Sabbath as a memorial of His completed creative work.” This “spin” on the account is presented to help bolster the Adventist argument for the weekly Sabbath. Adventists would like to convince the readers, and reinforce with their followers, that the Sabbath was instituted at creation and continues “perpetually” throughout eternity.

There is no evidence that Adam rested on the seventh day, or any sub-



ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #6

**THE CREATION:
WHERE IS
SABBATH?**

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Even within this most innocuous-sounding of the Adventist beliefs we find the seeds of their erroneous teaching being sown.

sequent seventh day. The first biblical evidence of any person observing a Sabbath is at the time of Moses (Ex. 16). It is also important to understand in the creation account that God ceased His work of creation at the end of the sixth day but did not resume it on the eighth. God did not stop and rest for a day; God had finished creation. The creation rest was ongoing from the end of the 6th day forward. God actually established the Sabbath as a memorial of His completed work at Sinai. The Genesis account does not establish Sabbath as a creation memorial but merely states that God ceased from His work and blessed the day He finished.

Also hidden within this belief statement is an Adventist error that would only be apparent to one who is highly familiar with Adventist thinking. Scripture plainly states, as this belief affirms, that Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. What this belief statement fails to convey to outsiders is that Ellen White wrote—and Adventists understand—that God has a physical body and that man is made in the physical image of God.

Another concern linked to creation is the Adventist idea of nature as “God’s second Book”. The 1988 explanation of Fundamental Belief #6 states, “as we are drawn to God through nature, we learn more about the qualities of God, qualities that can be incorporated into our own lives.” This grossly distorts the idea presented in Romans 1:20 that evidence of God in creation leaves people without excuse to acknowledge Him; instead, they turn to a pagan-like worship of nature as a source of truth that is similar to Scripture in its ability to draw

us to God and teach us about the qualities of God.

Even within this most innocuous-sounding of the Adventist beliefs we find the seeds of their erroneous teaching being sown. †



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.

Next issue: Rick Barker will present his findings on Adventism’s doctrine concerning the nature of man.



Wonderful issue

What a wonderful *Proclamation!* issue! I especially appreciated Dale’s article on the central pillar—the Investigative Judgment.

Also, Martin Carey’s article “Contemplating Prayer” was excellent. He very correctly details the history of mysticism in various forms. Some good books on the subject include *Faith Undone, For Many Shall Come in My Name*, and *A Time of Departing*.

God bless you.
Dayton, OH.

Letter to Dale Ratzlaff

I have been an Adventist pastor for 43 years now, and although retired, am still working full time. I did full time evangelistic work for 19 years and ministerial work the rest. The last three years I have been involved in teaching cross cultural and theology classes to Baptist pastors and seminary students. I have been invited several times to speak to Baptist pastoral groups and have been asked to discuss topics on the sanctuary and especially the investigative judgment.

I don’t claim to be a scholar, Dale, but I feel I may have a legiti-

mate “basic” understanding of some of these issues. It may be homespun, but I would like to pass on to you something that has helped me a lot as I’ve moved from the known to the unknown in figuring out what the Lord would have us understand in His word. I have been a commercial fisherman in the past, and when I have had a tendency to become sea sick I’ve found that looking out at the horizon—the bigger view—gives my mind stability. It really works! I believe that, in a homely way, it is the same with understanding God’s word. If I get to pondering the close up details too long I get sick—when I look out at the overall bigger picture and plan of our Creator, the peace of understanding comes via the Holy Spirit. Everything fits and makes sense, and the Holy Spirit shows me how it all works together.

Yes, I can see that the investigative judgment deals with the minds of the whole universe and Satan’s accusations toward the weaknesses of God’s children. I see that God’s times are not man’s times and that the overall plan of our Creator’s taking care of the sin problem covers my life after 1844 like Christ’s death and over-all plan covers the lives of our old testament brothers and sisters.

I’m sorry that you have been hurt in the past by the actions of some of our Adventist brothers and sisters. You are so right about these being roadblocks to the working of the Holy Spirit on our hearts and minds. I’m so glad that we have the stability of Scripture to keep our minds at peace over the inconsistencies of people’s weaknesses of humanity and influence. I’m just so grateful we have a Savior God Who, in His incredible love, has

worked out a way for weak humanity to be saved eternally.

My concern and prayers follow you that maybe this “keeping our eyes on the horizon” will be a help.
VIA EMAIL

Dale’s response: Thanks for your email. I have several comments. I assume that you may have read my article in the last *Proclamation!* Is my assumption correct?

You and many others speak of us as “hurt” by Adventists. That is not the case. We did not leave because we were hurt. We left to keep a clear conscience in obedience to the Word of God.

I’m sorry that you have been hurt in the past by the actions of some of our Adventist brothers and sisters.

You speak of not focusing on the details but of keeping our eyes on the horizon. However, I believe that the Bible is very much focused on the words of Scripture—details if you wish.

What text do you use to show that the investigative judgment deals with the minds of the universe and of Satan’s accusations toward the weakness of God’s children? Do you believe that there are inhabitants on other worlds? What Bible reference do you use to prove that?

What texts do you use to go from Daniel 8:14 to get to October 22, 1844?

You say that the Creator covers you sins after 1844? Please explain how 1844 is significant.

Do you believe the door of salvation was shut in 1844 as Ellen White taught?

Do you believe that only those who come into the IJ are those who profess to believe in God?

Do you believe that no atonement was made at the cross as Crosier and Edson taught and as EGW endorsed?

Do you believe that Christ did not sit at the Father’s right hand immediately after the ascension?

Do you believe that there will be a time that Christians will have to live in the sight of God without a mediator?

You see, the details are important. The horizon is made up of the details. One cannot just skip over all the errors of Adventism—of which there are many—and visualize a beautiful sunset on the horizon.

The simple gospel says that if we confess that we are sinners and place our faith in Christ as our Substitute we have (present tense) eternal life and we have passed (once and for all time) out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

May God help us to build our theology on the details of God’s revelation.

God is our example

I humbly want to ask you one simple question, Colleen. Do you believe God is our example and that we should follow God? If so, listen to the Bible.

Hebrews 4:4 says, “God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” Ephesians 5:1 says, “Be ye followers of God as dear children.”

If God rested on the seventh day, why don’t you follow God’s example as the Bible says and promote the seventh day Sabbath?

Hebrews 4:9 says, “There STILL remains for God’s people a rest like God’s resting on the seventh day.” The *Good News For Modern Man Bible* says the Sabbath rest still remains!

Will you follow God’s example?

Please give me one text from the Bible where God rested from all His works on Sunday, the first day of the work week.

You are a good woman. Please answer this letter soon!

SILOAM SPRINGS, AR

Remember us in your prayers

We pray for you, our readers, and thank you for your prayers as we seek to serve our Lord Jesus faithfully in proclaiming the Gospel. We also thank you for your generous support that keeps this magazine and our ministry websites continuing to reach out to those that are caught in the bondage of legalism and a false hope.

Remember to include this ministry in your will or trust by designating Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. as a beneficiary.

Editor's response: First, God is not our example. He is our Creator and sovereign LORD. God is not a man; He cannot be our example. He can only be the One we worship.

Moreover, Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, is not our example in the sense Adventists say He is. Adventism teaches that if we follow Christ's example of praying and depending on the Holy Spirit, we, too, can avoid sin and keep the commandments. Jesus, however, did not come to show us how to keep the law. He came to fulfill the law and to be our Savior, the perfect sacrifice for sin who could bear the sin of the world because He was God, and who could pay the price of human blood because He was a man.

The only way Jesus was an example was in His showing those who were born again how to depend on their new Father. He was not an example for showing sinners how to live in order to be saved.

When Genesis 2:2-3 says that God rested on the Sabbath, the word underlying "rested" is a Hebrew word that means "ceased". In other words, God finished His work of creation. He didn't just stop in order to set apart a day and then take up His work again on the first day of the week.

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES

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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

God's finished work of creation was perfect and gave Adam and Eve perfect rest.

There is no command for anyone to keep Sunday, but there are New Testament verses that command believers not to make holy days, including Sabbath, an issue (Rom. 14:6; Col. 2:16-17). Sunday is not a replacement "Sabbath". It is the day our Lord Jesus rose from the dead and ushered in spiritual life now! It is the day the church

Sunday is not a replacement "Sabbath". It is the day our Lord Jesus rose from the dead and ushered in spiritual life now!

was formed (that year the Day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week: Lev. 23:15-16). These events do not make Sunday a new holy day; they do give Christians good reason for worshiping on that day as a commemoration of the Lord Jesus and of His outpouring of His Spirit.

In short, God did not rest on the Sabbath as an example to us. Rather, we enter the rest of His completed work when we believe in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 4:3). "Christ is the end of the law for those who believe" (Rom. 10:4).

"Contemplating Prayer" issue excellent

Your last issue with the article exposing contemplative prayer was excellent. This, of course, has been received in the emergent church movement. It is the teaching of Hinduism, plainly stated. It is a Satanic invasion into the church where one can "recreate" Jesus, and it can be so beautiful to the partaker. But it is not true—therefore, it is a lie, and Satan's greatest power is lying.

Thank you for being faithful to God's word and the Lord Jesus Christ.

TOM ADCOCK, PRESIDENT
JESUS PEOPLE INFO. CENTER

Letter requesting membership removal and pastor's response

This is my second request to remove my membership from the Seventh-day Adventist church. When I joined the church, I took a vow, agreeing to the church's doctrines. I no longer agree with these doctrines and thus can no longer in good conscience remain a member.

I am convinced that Ellen White's writings are not the "Spirit of Prophecy." Her views often con-

tradict and undermine the Bible.

I do not believe that Jesus is Michael the Archangel.

I do not believe Christ began His work of investigative judgment in 1844. This doctrine is not biblical and denies the finished work on the cross and our assurance of salvation. I disagree with Ellen's teaching that our sins will be placed on Satan (as scapegoat). The Bible teaches that Jesus already paid the price and suffered for our sin.

I disagree with Ellen White's writings where she claims that we should not say we are saved and that the Sabbath is the seal of God (Eph. 4:30, 2 Cor. 1:21, 22). The Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel (Ex. 31: 16, 17). The Gentiles coming into the church were never told to keep the Sabbath or how to keep it (Acts 15). The Mosaic/old covenant ended at Calvary. God made a new covenant based on faith and not on the works of the old covenant (Heb. 8:7-13). The old covenant included the 10 Commandments (Heb. 9:1-4) and was replaced by a new covenant (Heb. 8:7-13, Rom.10:4). We are no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14, Gal. 5:18, 1 Cor. 9:20).

The Bible is clear that Christians are not required to observe the Jewish dietary laws, annual feast days, monthly feast days, or the weekly Sabbaths (Hos. 2:11, Col. 2:14-17).

I do not agree with the pro-choice stance the Adventist church takes regarding abortion. Many Adventist medical facilities perform abortions. See the following article from AdventLife which gives specifics about hospitals and numbers of abortions: <http://adventlife.wordpress.com/2012/03/21/>

I wish to let you know that in leaving the Adventist Church, I am not leaving Christ. My children and I have started attending another church where our lives are enriched and we are growing in Christ. I love Jesus and feel that I must follow truth as it has been revealed to me. I have accepted Jesus as my Savior and I have assurance of my salvation (1 Jn. 5:13). I would like a letter from the church confirming that my name has been taken off the church roll. I would appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Best Christian wishes to each of you.
MISSOURI

Pastor's response: The church board has voted to honor your request; the board, however, does not have the authority [to remove your name], so it has been referred to the next business meeting which is in July.

If you stay close to Jesus you will be fine; I suspect from looking at the list, however, that you are studying under people who are trying to justify their own belief system. Keep studying, keep praying, keep looking to God for guidance; and someday my prayer is that you will look at things from God's point of view instead of man's.

Best wishes, may God bless. †

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:
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The life **A F T E R** with Chris Lee

Typically I write this column to those who are already living the life after Adventism. However, this time I'd like to address those who haven't yet taken that step. Colleen's piece on the 150th anniversary of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference started me thinking. The question that keeps reverberating through my mind is, "When does it end?" The question isn't in reference to the Adventist organization; I don't expect Adventism to become extinct this side of Heaven. The question is a very personal one.

When I first started to question aspects of Adventism, I began to dialogue with friends and family, often asking, "Where is that in the Bible?" In reference to Adventist practices, friends and family would frequently answer, "That's just the way it is. There are some things you just do." The extended discussion made it clear that many practices were mainly about conforming to the expectations of Adventist culture. When it came to doctrinal beliefs, I heard repeatedly, "You need to talk to Pastor 'Smith' or Professor 'Jones'. They really understand this stuff, and I'm sure they can explain it to you." Even though the people I was talking with could rarely defend Adventist beliefs, they were convinced those beliefs must be right because a lot of smart people said so.

The problem was, people in leadership didn't have satisfying answers, either. At that level I usually received responses that went something like, "I personally don't really emphasize that doctrine, and I don't think The Church really teaches it much anymore. I think maybe we need to look at that one a little differently. If you look at it like this..." They would then go on to basically defend the Adventist distinctive in question by slightly redefining it, all the while downplaying it. It was rarely a biblical defense, but rather a type of dissembling rationalization. Rather than



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.



... had one pastor tell me I could be a good Adventist without those beliefs, as long as I kept it quiet and didn't serve in any visible roles.

our children to do so as well.

I kept asking myself, "When does it end? At what point do you stand up and say, 'Enough! No more lies. It ends here.?' " I decided I had reached that point. I wanted something better for my kids. I wanted them to have a relationship with Jesus instead of just a membership in a group. Instead of fear, shame, and pressured conformance, I wanted them to experience joy and freedom in Christ. But I didn't just leave for my kids. Leaving was an act of obedience to the leading of the Spirit. I left my culture so I could fully embrace my Savior.

It's been 150 years of lies, deceit, legalism, and bondage to unbiblical beliefs. So I ask you, when does it end for you and for your descendants? When is enough, enough? When are you going to begin living the life Jesus is offering in Him?

When are you going to begin the life after? †

defending Adventist beliefs, I had one pastor tell me I could be a good Adventist without those beliefs, as long as I kept it quiet and didn't serve in any visible roles. In effect, he invited me to remain in his congregation as a second class citizen, barred from full participation.

The theme that came through from both lay Adventists and leadership was that belonging to the group was preeminent. It didn't matter so much if you understood, could defend, or even agreed with SDA beliefs as long as you acquiesced to the group and went along. I saw this attitude playing out in my generation. So many of my adult friends were quietly living a non-Adventist lifestyle, all the while hiding it from their aging parents and other church members. Many of us were living double lives and unintentionally teaching