Growing in Jesus

Colleen Tinker

Almost exactly six years ago, we wrote a letter to our Adventist church and asked that we be removed from membership. We were astonished by our newly-discovered freedom in Christ, and writing that letter culminated an intense three years of studying and searching for truth and of praying to know God's will. When we said good-bye to Adventism, we felt as if we were jumping off a cliff into an unseen, unknowable void. Only after we began our free fall did the miracle happen: God caught us in his arms. His grip has not loosened, and he has brought us, as the Shaker hymn says, into “the valley of love and delight.”

That valley, though, is new territory. It has shadowed places where we must walk, and the terrain is often surprising—even daunting. Yet the Holy Spirit never leaves us, and we never navigate our journey alone. During the past six years we have learned that walking away from Adventism—or from any other enmeshment—involves several years of discovering a new identity, learning new ways to live and worship, and deepening in Jesus. For most of us, this new life realises Romans 7:6: “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” Once we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, our transformation from sinners into saints (Romans 6:22) makes it possible for us to release our grip on our shame and our hopeless despair. Instead, we look into the face of Jesus, and his love makes it possible for us to release our grip on our shame and our secrets.

Obedience assumes an entirely new meaning when we are in Christ. Instead of implying that we will faithfully honor the law, obedience now means saying “yes” to Him, wherever He leads and whatever He asks of us. Obedience in the new birth is to Jesus, not to an external, written law. (2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Peter 2:12)

Obedience to Jesus as opposed to the law, however, sounds so subjective. How do we know what Jesus is really telling us? How do we live by the Spirit?

There are several things we have come to consider essential in learning to walk by the Spirit. The first is regular, inductive Bible study. The Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and thoroughly equips us for “every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Holy Spirit that lives in us after we accept Jesus will teach us the Bible He inspired when He asked to guide our study. The Bible is our standard by which we measure every teaching and idea. We can confidently expect the Holy Spirit to reveal Biblical truth to us when we want to know the truth and when we ask Jesus to show it to us. The Bereans received special commendation for their faith in the Bible’s authority and for their commitment to regular, in-depth study: “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” (Acts 17:11)

Only when we immerse ourselves in the Word of God will we fill ourselves with God’s wisdom and become able to discern the often subtle distinctions between truth and deception. By studying scripture, we learn to recognize the Holy Spirit’s prompting and teaching, and we grow in our ability to know God’s will for us.

The second thing we see as essential is finding a healthy church. Each of us has a unique function, and if we cut ourselves off from our life in the body, we lose our usefulness. We also make sure he was representing their theological positions correctly.

He received feedback from some Adventists that his portrayal was inaccurate. He requested a representative group of leaders to meet with him regarding a series of questions he had developed. The answers would demonstrate to him whether the SDA church was a cult, an evangelical Christian denomination, or a heterodox sect.

Stephen Pitcher was baptized at age 17 in a Baptist church. He later converted to Adventism. During his 15 years in the Adventist church, he continued studying the beliefs and practices of unorthodox religions and gave seminars about them. His studies eventually led him to leave Adventism. He resides in Riverside, California, with his two children.
Meeting Jesus challenges everything we thought we knew. This encounter overturns our beliefs, changes our identities, and calls us to new commitments. It is the most shattering and freeing event we ever experience.

The Bible becomes a living book, vibrant with reality which its author, the Holy Spirit, reveals to us. As we begin to embrace our security in Christ and let go of ourselves we cherish before the love of Jesus awake us to the truth. As time goes on, however, we must continue to live and work and even suffer; We find that life's demands threaten to eclipse our new relationship with Jesus, and we feel pulled back into our old habits of coping. Sometimes the resistance we feel from loved ones paralyzes us, and we stop pursuing deeper intimacy with Christ.

If Sabbath rest in Jesus is real, though, it has to work at the points where our lives are most out-of-control. If Sabbath rest in Jesus is real, though, it has to work at the points where our lives are most out-of-control. If His rest doesn't make our lives different, then we need to pay a lot better off as Christ-followers than we were as deceived, self-protective spirituals.

As we learn to live in Jesus, our great challenge is to live with the Holy Spirit Who indwells us and makes it His business to discipline us as God's sons and daughters. (Hebrews 12:1-12) We can rest in the growing knowledge that our sovereign God allows nothing to touch our lives that doesn't first come through the filter of His love. Our response to God's call on our lives to release our tight control on our circumstances. When our Father places His work or His will and let go of heresies we cherished before the reality which its author, the Holy Spirit, reveals to us. As we begin to embrace our security in Christ and let go of ourselves we cherish before the love of Jesus awake us to the truth. As time goes on, however, we must continue to live and work and even suffer; We find that life's demands threaten to eclipse our new relationship with Jesus, and we feel pulled back into our old habits of coping. Sometimes the resistance we feel from loved ones paralyzes us, and we stop pursuing deeper intimacy with Christ.

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seeking God with all my heart

Christine Cole

my life story can be summed up with the verse from Jeremiah 29:13: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

I grew up on the Pacific island of Guam where my father was a minister and my mother a teacher. They were Seventh-day Adventist missionaries from the Philippines. My paternal grandfather was also a minister of the Adventist church. God used this rich heritage to be the soil in my heart where He planted the seeds for my desire to seek Him. From a young age, God blessed me with the eagerness to learn about spiritual things. I vividly remember sitting through evangelistic meetings, still in grade school, listening to the Bible being taught along with the unique Adventist doctrines and taking them all in. After attending the baptismal class at the age of ten and asking Jesus into my heart, I was baptized. By the time I graduated from Guam SDA Academy and left for Loma Linda University to pursue a career in nursing, I was a committed Adventist. Fully believing I was privileged to be a part of the “remnant church,” while college in the late 1970’s, one “Week of Prayer” stood out for me. It was led by Desmond Ford, and his topic was the assurance of salvation and how much God loved me. It was the first time in my life that I heard that I could be sure of my salvation!

Until then, I believed that my salvation was tied to my performance and works—particularly in the area of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Because I was busy with school and dating, I was not aware that shortly after that “Week of Prayer,” Desmond Ford became embroiled in a major crisis of the Adventist church catalyzed by his research and study on the doctrine of the investigative judgment. I would only learn about this turmoil later.

After getting married and settling down in Redlands, California, I was invited to a non-denominational Bible study—Bible Study Fellowship (BSF). I joined, thinking it would be nice to do some in-depth studying of the Bible. Little did I know that it would challenge my Adventist beliefs and thus change my life Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit…” I was so passionate that when one studies the Word of God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one will be changed! Those seeds God had planted in my heart were starting to germinate.

In my second year of BSF we studied the Gospel of John. When we came to the death of Jesus, it was pointed out that the veil of the temple in Jerusalem ripped apart from top to bottom, signifying that it was a supernatural act. This represented Christ’s broken body opening the way for believers to have forgiveness of sins and direct access to the Father who gives us assurance of salvation!

This was a new concept for me because I had been taught the doctrine of the investigative Judgment—that when Christ died, was resurrected and went to heaven. He entered the heavenly sanctuary but only stayed in the Holy Place, the first compartment of the temple. He did not enter the Holy of Holies, where the Most Holy Place, which the veil covered in the temple, until October 22, 1844, and then only...
I realized that, as an Adventist, I was brought up holding onto the Old Covenant, making it difficult for me to embrace the New Covenant. My understanding of the Bible was becoming much clearer. The seeds of truth were growing.

Then, in the Fall of 1997, we went through the book of Hebrews in ESE. The author of Hebrews does an excellent explanation of the Old and the New Covenants and how the Old Covenant, which included the Sabbath commandment, was for the Israelites. The New Covenant, which was established when Christ came and established the New Covenant.

In the New Covenant, God said, "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10). I learned that, just as the Sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the sign of remembrance in the New Covenant (1 Cor 11:23-26). Instead of the Sabbath being the "seal" in the end time (as SDAs are taught), we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, making us God's children who are guaranteed eternal life (2 Cor 1:21,22 and Gal 4:6).

As I studied, it felt like a veil was being lifted and I was beginning to understand God's grace more clearly. I realized that, as an Adventist, I was brought up holding onto the Old Covenant, making it difficult for me to embrace the New Covenant. And if I couldn't fully embrace and live in the New Covenant, I could never be completely free in Christ to have a relationship with Him in which to grow and experience Him to the fullest. It was at that point that I was convicted to leave the Adventist church. So in early 1998, I visited a Sunday church—Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands—for the first time. What a blessed experience it was to worship with other seekers and growing children of God! I never went back to the Adventist church after that first visit.

Although it was very difficult to cut ties with the denomination that had been such a huge part of my life, God did enable me to leave. God has given a lot of support to one who is obsessed w/ being a vegetarian, whose nerves are frazzled, is on tranquilizers, and sleeps only with the help of sleeping pills. For whatever reason you have for this behavior, I'm sure you have convinced yourself it's all for your needs.

I once attempted to bring a balance to your Letters to the Editor section of Proclamation! to see if different types of letters you elect to publish that are so intellectually quite limited. Your first letter, “Of Plagues and Fires,” is filled with evidence of diminished capacity. The statement, “If you teach that EGW is a false prophet you are 100% lying,” is an example. The next statement says, "Ellen G. White is not our prophet." Then the next few sentences are clearly contradictions. To start your series of letters with one of such conflicted statements is quite bewildering.

Perhaps the lack of balance in the Adventist's letters portay is not by design. You may not receive mail from those who are more intellectually competent. Yet even the secular news magazines are far enough to publish letters from those whose political positions may not reflect the magazine's slants. And they are well written.

I once attempted to bring a balance to your Letters to the Editor section, but it didn't seem to fit your editorial policy. (Please don't use my name if you choose to use this.)
Should Christians practice tithing?

Dennis J. Fischer

A comprehensive study of tithing codes in Old Testament times reveals a system of incredible complexity and frequent change. History has shown that any dissent on this topic can bring the “wrath of God” upon us by willing and able churchmen. The primary focus of this study deals with the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, history, policy, and practice of tithing. Although a large segment of Adventists do not return an honest tith, any personal or public inquiry into this doctrinal pillar is done at our own peril.

From 1859 to the late 1870s, Adventists did not have a doctrine on tithing as it is known today; instead, they advocated a plan known as “systematic benevolence.” It was designed for church members from 18 to 60 years of age that owned property. Also, men and women had different rate schedules for suggested giving. The Good Samaritan, an exclusive magazine for the SB plan, was published to promote this endeavor. Ellen White gave this plan her full endorsement. At first, local churches had complete control of the SB funds; however, the growing church hierarchy soon seized upon such liberties.1

Interestingly, it was Dudley Canright, Adventism’s most notable heretic, that championed the current doctrine of tithing in the mid-1870s. Ellen White gave wholehearted approval to this plan that projected increased revenue from every income category. One of the major differences in these two plans was that the systematic benevolent funds could also be used for local church expenses. The tithe funds, on the other hand, were restricted for ministerial salaries and for various levels of administrative costs.

Another largely overlooked and/or ignored aspect of tithing in our economy is the issue of unequal sacrifice. For example, a tither earning merely $1,000,000.00 per year has a much greater financial burden for the basic needs of life than the tither earning $100,000.00 per year (even flat tax proponents and the IRS allow an exemption for low income). Old Testament tithing codes made provision for public welfare, temple maintenance, support for priests and other professional personnel, theocratic government expenses, festal celebrations, and so forth. It is important to note that there never was a monetary tith (i.e., salaries) exempt. Only crops and animals came under the various tithing regulations. It is most surprising to many Christians that a large segment of the Hebrew people did not tithe at all. For example, farm hands did not tithe. Furthermore, occupations like fishermen, construction workers, lumbermen, weavers, handi-

craft workers, miners, merchandisers, and manufacturers were also exempt from tithing. The teaching profession, on the other hand, was an important and integral part of the Levitical system. The occupations of the Levites were well-known and the professional fields today. The Levites not only did not tithe, but Israel’s tithe supports the Levites.

Mandatory Tithe

Unlike Israel’s laws, the General Conference Working Policy requires all denominational employees to tithe their incomes in order to keep their jobs (usually routine audits, known or unknown to the church employee, are used to enforce full compliance). In the event that an employee is found in noncompliance, administrative action can be severe; namely, a summons to a special meeting, restitution of funds allegedly stolen from God (payment of back tithe), or termination of employment. Enforcement action, however, is very lax to nonexistent for employees other than ministers.

In spite of the inconsistency of the church in disciplining its workers for noncompliance, local church treasurers are indispensable to the local pastor and his nominating committees to verify eligibility for any position of influence. Sadly but truly, some people will keep their positions, and some people tithe to gain positions in the church. Does not this required tithe sound like the mandatory dues of an organized labor movement? Only tithers can hold positions in the local church. This effectively translates into a two-tier SDA membership system. For extra job security and/or legalistic passion, many people in the “upper tier” tithe on gross income instead of net income to insure that they have not robbed God. The honest, objective student of Scripture will find it impossible to trace the various versions of tithing recorded during different time frames in the Old Testament. Even modern Orthodox Jews realize the futility of adhering to the tithing institution without having an organizing presence. Rabbinical canonists prohibited tithing after the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70. Today, Jews use alternative methods of financing their congregation’s needs. “In addition to the natural tendency of human beings to set their own standards of giving, the church has established various standards of its own, all of which must be scrutinized in terms of their faithfulness to the basic understanding which motivates Christian giving. All too often, as a compensation for man’s innate selfishness, the church has attempted to force its members to be more generous by imposing standards upon them which supposedly have the weight of divine law. The church must be held responsible for having confused and distorted the true meaning of Christian stewardship.”

Proclamation!

As may be learned from 1 Samuel 8:15, 17, tithe could also be a royal tax which the king could exact and give to his officials. This ambiguity of the tithe, as a royal due on the one hand and as a sacred donation on the other, is to be explained by the fact that temples to which tithe was assigned were royal temples (cf. esp. Amos 7:13), and such, the property and treasures in them were put at the king’s disposal. In Genesis 14:20 Abraham gives a tithe (after his battle with the four kings of the north) to Melchizedek the king-priest of Shalem, and in Genesis 28:22 (cf. also Amos 4:4) Jacob vows to pay the tithe according to the “royal chapel” of the Northern Kingdom (Amos 7:13). The mention of specifically these two “royal temples” in connection with the tithe is not a coincidence. It seems that these two temples were specifically:

The institution of collecting tithes in the northern chapel Beth-El is linked to Jacob, the ancestor hero par excellence of the northern tribes, while the institution of the tithe in the royal sanctuary of Jerusalem is traced back to Abraham, whose tradi- tion and love and must remove every doubt forever. It appears that the untransformation

The Seventh-day Adventists went through a major transformation in 1957. With the publication of Questions on Doctrine, it was no longer necessary to refer to earlier works in order to find support for those beliefs from the Bible. The church leadership was not transparent nor straightforward and was definitely one-sided to appease the evangelicals. In a word, they were deceptive.

The original Questions on Doctrine cannot be trusted as an official doctrinal statement from the Seventh-day Adventist church. The Annotated Edition, published by a universitiy as part of a collection of early “heritage” documents, shows that the church has relegated this volume to the status of an historical relic. Unfortunately, Knight made a strong effort to confuse the wording of QOD in his introduction; however, he has
Knight is in alignment with the fundamental statements of belief of the Adventist church including that of imparted righteousness and ultimate perfection. He includes both the 1931 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (22 statements) and the revised 1980 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (27 statements) to support his position. The 1980 statement includes section 10, “The Experience of Salvation:” it is stated: “The Spirit ... writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment.” (p. 12). God’s law of love, for the Seventh-day Adventists, are the Ten Commandments written on the heart of the believer with special emphasis on the fourth commandment. For Adventists, abiding in Christ and partaking of the divine nature provide assurance of salvation, rather than trusting in what is done for us. For the Seventh-day Adventist, what is done for us is as integral to salvation as what is done to us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done for us is salvation. What is done in us is the lifetime work of the Holy Spirit. Nothing men can do, or have done, can in any way merit salvation. (QOD, p. 141). The authors of Questions on Doctrine equate the experiential character perfection of Matthew 5:48 with the perfect sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews 10, which perfected His people for all time (10:14). Hebrews 10 is referring to ... the perfection that Christ had accomplished for His people. By way of contrast, the perfecting of Matthew 5:48 refers to what Christ is seeking to do in His people... (p. 307). Although there is some disagreement, most evangelicals identify the statement of Jesus in Matthew 5:48 as one of being not of becoming Christ doesn’t say “become perfect!” He says “be perfect.” Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:48, NIV) Malachi’s day came to 430 B. C. Normally, “all the tithes” or the “whole tithe” was not needed at once. (p. 311). Furthermore, God promised to open the “floodgates of heaven” (NIV) “that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10, KJV). This promise clearly applied to the emergency in Malachi’s day about 430 B. C. Normally, “all the tithes” or the “whole tithe” was not needed at once.
Christian stewardship concerns itself with more than just giving of a person's material resources. It includes giving yourself, your time, and your talent in service to the Lord.

The word “righteousness” became synonymous with “almsgiving.” John Selden (1584-1654), English jurist and scholar, in his monumental work The Historie of Tithes published in 1618 contends that any material percentage was not in keeping with the free and liberal spirit of the early Christians. Selden’s investigations have been recognized as a leading authority in revealing that the early Christians did not tithe uninterruptedly from the beginning of time. Selden contended that the Church of England had the legal right to collect tithes, but not the biblical right. Due to his tithe views, his work was ruthlessly suppressed by churchmen while he was incarcerated in the Tower of London.

It was a special treat for me to have access to John Selden’s The Historie of Tithes with its Old English script. When the assistant in the Special Documents Division of Love Library at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, brought me this book in a plastic box, I carefully opened the book as the cover fell off. This scholarly work was still in fair condition despite its 380th birthday. After studying the book for nearly an hour, I left in awe to have held such a monumental, forbidden book in my hands. I proceeded to the microfilm department to get some copies of the text. The book itself cannot be checked out due to its rarity and age.

With compulsory tithe back in the church, legalism took a giant leap forward. The old adage “half of your income is yours itself” was never more accurate than in this matter. “Zwingle made a strong attack on the ecclesiastical system of tithe. He declared the tithes to be merely voluntary offerings.” 1 Soon after the Reformation, there were peasant revolts throughout Europe. The scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Some, therefore, contend that the required sacrifice of the Pharisaic righteousness can be achieved merely by doing more of what the Pharisees do. Let us never forget that all the tithe-paying in the world will not save us. Indeed, salvation is a gift to be received, not a goal to be achieved.

Perhaps it will be said that tithing which does not rest upon a divine command for a fixed due is not tithing. This may be true, but in our century there is meaning in regular proportionate giving without the shackles of the law. 2 Christian stewardship concerns itself more than just giving of a person’s material resources. It includes giving yourself, your time, and your talent in service to the Lord. Paul wrote, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has determined in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, NIV). Someone aptly stated, “Money doesn’t make people greedy, but it shows who is.”

The Gospel breeds generosity wherever it takes root. With the Spirit-feeling, giving the Christian no longer rears for the laws of Moses to finance the Great Commission. The New Covenant must be allowed to modify, interpret, or transform Old Covenant directives in a Christ-centered way.

ENDNOTES
6. Ibid., p. 135.
7. Ibid., p. 143.


...the denomination in the closing years of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first has witnessed a resurgence of anti-Trinitarianism and semi-Arianism on the basis that the earliest founders of the denomination held those views.

Answers on doctrine
The answer Walter Martin never received to his third question from the General Conference in 1983 has finally been answered. The new annotated edition of QOD has modified the church’s answers to the first and second questions so they align with the third answer. The answer to the first question, why is the book QOD no longer available, has been modified from "there are many copies of this book available in libraries" to the actual "republication" of an annotated edition. The answer to the second question, does the Adventist church still hold to the answers it gave in QOD to the doctrinal questions posed by non-Adventists, has been modified from "yes" to "not as the answers were stated in the 1957 edition of QOD." The third question again was: Do you regard the interpretations of the Bible by Ellen G. White to be infallible, that is, to be the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture? For instance, if an issue comes up where you are debating someone and White speaks on it, is that the infallible voice?

This question may never be answered with a firm "yes" or "no." To answer "yes" would deny the repeated statements that the Bible alone is used to derive doctrine. A "no" would, for many in the church, deny the special "Gift of Prophecy" that was given to God's last-day messenger, Ellen G. White for the purpose of leading this denomination further into the light of the present truths" revealed through her. The new annotated QOD, however, affirms that Adventism has never modified its doctrines. Indeed, this "new" volume affirms Adventists' dependence upon Ellen G. White by supporting all of the church's doctrines and traditional interpretations.

Jesus’ deity
The church had revised and published 22 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists in 1931. Fundamentals two and three included statements on the Trinity and the deity of Christ, yet it was not until the 1940s that debates continued within the church on the deity of Christ. It wasn’t until 1965 that the wording of “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the church hymnal was re-worded to include the traditional Trinitarian phrase, “God in three persons, blessed Trinity.” Replacement of the Adventist emendation “God over all Who rules eternally” by the 1950s, the church was able to state that it was to be recognized as a truly Trinitarian denomination. The way this doctrine was finally stated in 1957 QOD was deceptive and false. Our people have always believed in the deity and pre-existence of Christ, most of them quite likely unaware of any dispute as to the exact relationships of the Godhead... we have statements from Ellen G. White, at least from the 1870s and 1880s, on the deity of Christ, and on His oneness and equality with God, and from about 1890 on she expressed herself with increasing frequency... [QOD, p. 48]

Note in the above quotation the church demonstrates that it has statements from Ellen G. White supporting Christ’s Deity. In the Fundamental Beliefs, Certificate of Baptism, and Church Manual, scripture is referenced in support of Christ’s deity. We will see, however, that the members and leaders use Ellen White as the final authority.

Many of the early anti-Trinitarians include Ellen White’s husband, James White, Uriah Smith, General Conference president and author of The Revelation, E. J. Waggoner, author of Our Righteousness, and many other significant figures in early Adventist history.

Knight's knowledge of this history provides us with a correction to the point of view stated in the original QOD: Ellen White was one of the very few among the earliest Adventist leaders who was not aggressively anti-Trinitarian. (p. 48)

Neither was she aggressively Trinitarian. If she had been stronger on this point, there would not be so much confusion in the church on the doctrine. Knight identifies the problem as current: “... the denomination in the closing years of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first has witnessed a resurgence of anti-Trinitarianism and semi-Arianism on the basis that the earliest founders of the denomination held those views...” (p. 39)

Note that this resurgence is not on the basis of scripture, but on what the early SDA founders believed. He then unintentionally emphasizes Adventists' confusion over the question of Christ's deity by referring to a statement of Ellen G. White's in her book The Desire of Ages, p. 530, referring to Christ... in Christ is life original, un borrowed, underived..." His annotation indicates:

Discoveries in Romans
Colleen Tinker
Since last September, the Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study which meets at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, has been going through Romans. We have been doing verse-by-verse inductive study, and the book is yielding a wealth of treasures.

The past two months we’ve spent in Romans 7, and this previously enigmatic (to me) chapter has begun to make sense. Here are a couple of insights we’ve gleaned:

Living by the Spirit
Verses 8b through 9a say: “For apart from sin, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ‘...Theology does not agree on whether this passage refers to the time of Paul’s bar mitzvah at the age of 13 when, as a Jewish male, he assumed full responsibility for the law, or whether it refers to the time of his conversion when the extent of the law’s rigors became clear to him. Given its position between chapter six in which Paul explains we have died to sin and chapter eight which reveals living by the Spirit, we believe Paul is talking about his experience after his conversion. How, if Paul met Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit, could the commandment come to him? When Daniel and the apostles that the things that convict us of sin and lead us to Christ? As we looked up texts related to the law leading us to Christ, we began to realize that nothing, not even the law, can convict a person of sin apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit. Romans one and two clarify that those who lived before the law were no more guilty of sin than were the Jews who had the law; if anything, the Jews were more guilty than the “lawless” Gentiles. What, then, made the difference between those who had the law and those who didn’t? The difference was the presence of God. God did not give Israel the Torah in a spiritual vacuum. He revealed it to Moses in person, and he put his physical presence among them in a cloud that dwelled in their tabernacle and later in their temple. The law accompanied a literal revelation of God. Only Israel had the physical presence of God among them; that fact is the reason the law was only for Israel, not for the Gentile nations. The law is pointless apart from a revelation of God.

Law’s function fulfilled
When Jesus fulfilled the law, He also fulfilled its function of pointing people to Christ. On this side of the cross, we have the Holy Spirit convulsing us of sin and to draw us to Jesus. No longer are the presence of God and the requirements of the law unattainable; through the Holy Spirit God draws us to repentance and to acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice for us, and he writes his law on our hearts when he indwells us.

When the commandment came to Paul, it came when the Holy Spirit gave him spiritually. He finally realized his true standing before the law which he thought he had been honoring. He discovered he had to take his eyes off the law and look only at Jesus.

One more related insights regards verse 11: “For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.” The question we asked was this: if the law is holy, as Paul states in verse 12, how can sin use it to deceive us and cause us to transgress?

Serpent appealed to logic
We looked closely at the story of Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3. The serpent’s opening question to Eve was: “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1) The serpent beguiled Eve into analyzing and questioning God’s command. He appealed to her senses of reason, logic, and curiosity, and he flattered her into thinking she could rationalize away her need literally to obey. Had Eve kept her focus on God and His word instead of being distracted by analyzing his command, she could have resisted the serpent’s cunning. Sin deceives us by causing us to focus on the law, analyzing and rationalizing its intent. When we raise our eyes to Jesus, He draws us to honor our relationships with Him, and we find the courage in his love to say “no” to temptation.

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Review of republished QOD

the Trinity and 4) the human nature of the incarnate Christ.

Accomplishment of the original Question on Doctrine

This single volume accomplished two major changes for the Seventh-day Adventist church. First, it increased the acceptance of Seventh-day Adventists as fellow evangelical Christians by many who trusted Barnhouse and Martin’s scholarship. The language used in the book was also language that was comfortable to and used by many evangelical Christians.

Second, the book caused significant confusion and strife within the ranks of Adventism. The language used to explain Adventist doctrines was not consistent with language used by most Adventists prior to 1957. It appeared in some cases that the authors had made slight changes in the understanding of unique Adventist doctrines. Some polarization between previously agreeable groups within Adventism began to occur.

With the current annotated edition, the 46-year-long effects of the book may reverse if the annotations are received as an official statement by the church. Many evangelical Christians may no longer look on Adventists as fellow evangelical Christians, while those inside the denomination may find greater acceptance from their fellow Adventists rather than being referred to as “disaffected brethren” or “ultra-conservatives.”

Ford and his lengthy study of the Investigative Judgment, as well as Walter T. Rea’s study of the plagiarism of Ellen G. White1 had caught Martin’s attention. He had formulated three new questions and had asked help from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to provide answers for these questions which were:

1. Why is the book Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine no longer available?
2. Does the Seventh-day Adventist church still hold to the answers it gave in that book to the doctrinal questions non-Adventists have posed?
3. Do you regard the interpretations of the Bible by Ellen G. White to be infallible, that is, to be the infallible rule of interpreting Scripture? For instance, if an issue comes up where you are debating something and Mrs. White speaks on it, is that the infallible voice?

The first question was answered as well in his reply. The third question was left conspicuously unanswered. Martin was not satisfied. He was becoming even more aware of the nature of the strife the original book had caused as well as the damage done to ministers who aligned themselves with the statements in QOD. Martin wanted a face-to-face meeting with leadership from the church, similar to what was done in the 1950s, to reconfirm, and go beyond, the statements provided in 1957. He also requested that QOD be republished so that he and the Christian world could know that the church stood behind and affirmed his statement and could be considered a Christian denomination.

He was finally given a face-to-face meeting with William G. Johnson, editor of Adventist Review, the church’s primary weekly organ. The meeting aired on the television program The John Ankerberg Show in 1985. Martin challenged the church and its representatives Johnson on national television to republish QOD. That particular program caused quite a stir within Adventism, opening fresh some of the wounds that had healed since 1957. In answering Martin’s questions, William Johnson consistently held up the Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Martin was not receiving a frank “yes” or “no” to his questions regarding the church’s position on QOD. The unanswered question and the “yes” answer given by Lesher was a matter of fact. That day as well as what seemed to Martin to be theological changes away from the positions printed in QOD, frustrated him. He strongly stated that the label “culty” may again be applied to this church, or perhaps the label never should have been removed as it was becoming apparent that he may have been deceived by a well-meaning minority of men in leadership in the 1950s.

The republication of QOD would not happen in Martin’s lifetime. Walter Martin passed away on June 26, 1989. The recent republication with annotations does provide the answers for which many have been looking.

History: a solution?

History is sometimes necessary to help restore peace in times of conflict. In the Adventist church, history may play a significant role in bringing to an end the years of debate and confusion regarding this one volume.

George R. Knight is an accomplished professor of history at Milligan College. The author of numerous books, he has provided clear insights into important events and individuals involved in setting the stage for Adventism as well as to those in the early years of the church. Some titles include From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of Alonzo T. Janes (1987), Millennial Fever and the End of the World (1980), A Study of Millenite Adventism (1993); A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists (1999); and A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs (2000).

The essential need regarding QOD was for someone in an authoritative position within Adventism to bring clarity to some of its ambiguous statements. Knight has accomplished this and more. To begin, he realizes the scope of the situation the book generated:

Questions on Doctrine easily qualifies as the most divisive book in Seventh-day Adventist history. A book published to help bring peace between Adventism and conservative Protestantism, its release brought prolonged alienation and separation to the Adventist factions that grew up around it.2

...Questions on Doctrine has been vilified by many Adventists and has probably done more to create theological division in the Adventist church than any other document in its more than 150-year history. (p. 516)

Knight’s “Historical and Theological Introduction” to the annotated edition provides a concise presentation of the people and events leading to the publication of QOD in 1957. His theological perspective, beginning on page xxvi, provides some of the reactions from both inside and outside Adventism. In this part of the introduction and throughout the annotations he also gives his interpretation of the theological statements made in the book. His first “theological conclusion” is the most unusual statement in the annotations:

We are in a position to make a first theological conclusion regarding Questions on Doctrine: That the book is almost entirely made up of definitive restatements of traditional Adventist theology that are phrased in such a way that the book remained faithful to Adventist beliefs while at the same time speaking in a language that those outside of Adventism could understand more easily. (p. xxix)

The fact that years of division and strife within the SDA church “grew up” around the publication of the book indicates that there were not just radical restatements. “However, Knight points out, when one reads QOD, one is reading traditional Adventism. Evangelicals Martin, Barnhouse, and Cannon thought they were responding to ‘clear statements’ but they were actually reading words designed to camouflage traditional Adventist doctrines. The doctrinal statements in QOD were unclear to church members, and divisions grew up around the newly worded doctrines. Traditional Adventism is what Martin and Barnhouse were concerned with from the beginning but because of the evangelical-sounding words used in the book, the men were led to believe that Adventism had come to hold orthodox evangelical positions. Following 1957, Martin spent a lengthy career defending the SDA church as a Christian denomination. He believed that QOD was truly a change in Adventist understandings from certain previous historical positions.

Perhaps Knight could have written: First Theological Conclusion: The book is almost entirely made up of restatements of traditional Adventist theology. However, it was phrased in such a way that the book confused faithful Adventists, while at the same time speaking in a language that was more acceptable to some evangelicals, allowing them to believe changes had been in place for years.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
Review of republished QOD

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

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W. Richard Lesher, vice-president of the General Conference, responded to Martin’s letter on April 29, 1983. In that letter, Lesher stated:

You ask first if Seventh-day Adventists still stand behind the answers given to your questions in Questions on Doctrine as they did in 1957. The answer is yes. You have noted in your letter that some opposed the answers given then, and, to some extent, the same situation exists today. But certainly the great majority of Seventh-day Adventists accept the views expressed in Questions on Doctrine.¹

The first question was answered as well in his reply. The third question was left conspicuously unanswered. Martin was not satisfied. He was becoming ever more aware of the nature of the strife the original book had caused as well as of the damage done to ministers who aligned themselves with the statements in QOD. Martin wanted a face-to-face meeting with leadership from the church, similar to what was done in the 1950s, to reconfirm, and go beyond, the statements provided in 1957. He also requested that QOD be republished so that he and the Christian world could know that the church stood behind the statement and could be considered a Christian denomination. He was finally given a face-to-face meeting with William G. Johnson, editor of Adventist Review, the church’s primary weekly organ. The meeting aired on the television program The John Ankerberg Show in 1985. Martin challenged the church and its representatives, Johnson, on national television to republish QOD.¹ That particular program caused quite a stir within Adventism, opening anew some of the wounds that had healed since 1957. In answering Martin’s questions, William Johnson consistently held up the Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. Martin was not receiving a frank “yes” or “no” to his questions regarding the church’s position on QOD. The unanswered question and the “yes” answer given by Lesher was toward the end of the meeting. This day as well as what seemed to Martin to be theological changes away from the positions printed in QOD, frustrated him. He strongly stated that the label “cult” may again be applied to this church, or perhaps the label never should have been removed as it was becoming apparent that he may have been deceived by a well-meaning minority of men in leadership in the 1950s.²

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The fact that years of division and strife within the SDA church “grew up” around the publication of the book indicates that there were not major theological restatements. “However,” Knight points out, when one reads QOD, one is reading traditional Adventism. Evangelicals Martin, Barnhouse, and Cannon thought they were recovering “clear statements”; but they were actually reading words designed to camouflage traditional Adventist doctrines. The doctrinal statements in QOD were unclear to church members, and divisions grew up around the newly recorded doctrines. Traditional Adventism is what church leaders and Barnhouse were concerned with from the beginning, but because of the evangelical-sounding words used in the book, the men were led to believe that Adventism had come to hold orthodox evangelical positions. Following 1957, Martin spent a lengthy career defending the SDA church as a Christian denomination. He believed that QOD was truly a change in Adventist understandings from certain previous historical positions. Perhaps Knight could have written: first theological conclusion:

The book is almost entirely made up of restatements of traditional Adventist theology. However, it was phrased in such a way that the book confused faithful Adventists, while at the same time speaking in a language that was more acceptable to some evangelicals, allowing them to believe changes had been in place for years.
Answers on doctrine

The answer Walter Martin never received to his third question from the General Conference in 1983 has finally been answered. The new annotated edition of QOD has modified the church’s answers to the first and second questions so they align with the third answer. The answer to the first question, why is the book QOD no longer available, has been modified from “there are many copies of this book available in libraries” to the actual “republication” of an annotated edition. The answer to the second question, does the Adventist church still hold to the answers it gave in QOD to the doctrinal questions posed by non-Adventists, has been modified from “yes” to “no” as the answers were stated in the 1957 edition of QOD. The third question again was:

Do you regard the interpretations of the Bible by Ellen G. White to be infallible, that is, to be the church on the deity of Christ. (It wasn’t until 1985 that the wording of “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the church hymn was re-worded to include the traditional Trinitarian phrase; “God in three persons, blessed Trinity”/replacing the Adventist emendation “God over all Who rules eternally”). By the 1950s, the church was able to state that it was to be recognized as a truly Trinitarian denomination. The way this doctrine was stated in the 1957 QOD was deceptive and false. Our people have always believed in the deity and pre-existence of Christ, most of them quite likely unaware of any dispute as to the exact relationships of the Godhead...we have statements from Ellen G. White, at least from the 1870s and 1880s, on the deity of Christ, and on His oneness and equality with God, and from about 1890 on she expressed herself with increasing frequency... (QOD, p. 48)

Note in the above quotation the church demonstrates that it has statements from Ellen G. White supporting Christ’s Deity. In the Fundamental Beliefs, Certificate of Baptism, and Church Manual, scripture is referenced in support of Christ’s deity. We will see, however, that the members and leaders use Ellen White as the final authority.

Many of the early anti-Trinitarians include Ellen White’s husband, James White, Uriah Smith, General Conference president and author of The Great Controversy, and Ellen G. White’s associate and pre-eminent Trinitarian text writer, Ellen G. White, at least from the 1870’s and 1880’s, on the deity of Christ, and on His oneness and equality with God, and from about 1890 on she expressed herself with increasing frequency... (QOD, p. 48)

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Discoveries in Romans

Colleen Tinker

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ince last September, the Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study which meets at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, has been going through Romans. We have been doing verse-by-verse inductive study, and the book is yielding a wealth of treasures. The past two months we’ve spent in Romans 7, and this previous- ly enigmatic (to me!) chapter has begun to make sense. Here are a couple of the insights we’ve gleaned.

Living by the Spirit

Verses 8b through 9 say: “For apart from sin, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.” Theologians do not agree on whether this passage refers to the time of Paul’s bar mitzvah at the age of 13 when, as a Jewish male, he assumed full responsibility for the law, or whether it refers to the time of his conversion when the extent of the Law’s rigors became clear to him. Given its position between chapter six in which Paul explains we have died to sin and chapter eight which reveals living by the Spirit, we believe Paul is talking about his experience after his conversion. How, if Paul met Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit, could the commandment come to him? Does God, in the same manner, make us alive apart from law? If God creates life in us, then it follows that the law is not the means by which we are made alive or made to live. If that is so, then the answer to the question, does the Adventist church still hold to the infallibility of its interpretations?...

What we are concerned with here is the relationship of the law to the church on the deity of Christ. (It wasn’t until 1985 that the wording of “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the church hymn was re-worded to include the traditional Trinitarian phrase; “God in three persons, blessed Trinity”/replacing the Adventist emendation “God over all Who rules eternally”). By the 1950s, the church was able to state that it was to be recognized as a truly Trinitarian denomination. The way this doctrine was stated in the 1957 QOD was deceptive and false. Our people have always believed in the deity and pre-existence of Christ, most of them quite likely unaware of any dispute as to the exact relationships of the Godhead...we have statements from Ellen G. White, at least from the 1870s and 1880s, on the deity of Christ, and on His oneness and equality with God, and from about 1890 on she expressed herself with increasing frequency... (QOD, p. 48)

The Desire of Ages

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Christian stewardship concerns itself with more than just giving of a person's material resources. It includes giving yourself, your time, and your talent in service to the Lord.

TITHING

The word “righteousness” became synonymous with “almsgiving.” John Selden (1584-1654), English jurist and scholar, in his monumental work The Historie of Tithes published in 1618, argued that any mathematical percentage was not in keeping with the free and liberal spirit of the early Christians. Selden’s investigations have been recognized as a leading authority in revealing that the early Christians did not tithe uninterrupted from the beginning of time. Selden contended that the Church of England had the legal right to collect tithes, but not the biblical right. Due to his tithe views, his work was ruthlessly suppressed by churchmen while he was incarcerated in the Tower of London.

It was a special treat for me to have access to John Selden’s The Historie of Tithes with its Old English script. When the assistant in the Special Documents Division of Love Library at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, brought me this book in a plastic box, I carefully opened the book as the cover fell off! This scholarly work was still in fine condition despite its 380th birthday. After studying the book for nearly an hour, I left in awe to have held such a monumental, forbidden book in my hand. I proceeded to the microfilm department to get some copies of the text. The book itself cannot be checked out due to its rarity and age.

With compulsory tithe backing in the church, legalism took a giant leap forward. The old adage their “history repeats itself” was never more accurate than in this matter. “Zwingle made a strong attack on the ecclesiastical system of tithing. He declared the tithes to be merely voluntary offerings.” 1 Soon after the Reformation, there were peasant revolts known as “tith war” against compulsory tithing. In the United States in 1876, Thomas Kate began a movement which was actually organized as the Layman Company dedicated to encouraging tithing in America. This modern tithing movement has grown tremendously ever since, until today we witness the phenomena of whole denominations, such as the Mormons and the Adventists, building their spiritual life around the practice of tithing.

Apparently, the young Seventh-day Adventist Church of the 1870s felt insecure and underfunded without a strict tithing doctrine. With a tithing mandate, members would presumably feel compelled to turn over more of their hard-earned resources. Furthermore, if the members felt that their salvation was at stake, they would be in full compliance. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34). Selden did not tithe uniformly. The Christian simply gives because he has been given and forgiven and much. Generosity is not the quantity of the gift, but the quality of the heart. Jesus stated, “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Some, therefore, contend that the required transcendent of the Pharisacial righteousness can be achieved merely by doing more of what the Pharisees do. Let us never forget that all the tithe-paying in the world will not save us. Indeed, salvation is a gift to be received, not a goal to be achieved.

Perhaps it will be said that tithing which does not rest upon a divine command for a fixed due is not tithing. This may be true, but in our century there is meaning in regular proportionate giving without the shackles of the law. 2 Christian stewardship concerns itself more than just giving of a person’s material resources. It includes giving yourself, your time, and your talent in service to the Lord. Paul wrote, “Remember this: Whoever sow sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6,7 NIV). Someone aptly stated, “Money doesn’t make people greedy, but it shows who is.”

The Gospel breeds generosity wherever it takes root. The Spirit-led giving, the Christian no longer fears for the means of Moses to finance the Great Commission. The New Covenant must be allowed to modify, interpret, or transform Old Covenant directives in a Christ-centered way.

ENDNOTES

6. Ibid., p. 135
7. Ibid., p. 143
8. Ibid., p. 143

That statement and others proved to be quite controversial and drove Adventist scholars back to their Bibles. 3 (p. 46) This provides great insight into the methodology used by Adventist scholars. It redounds to that mathematics over the deity of Christ that caused them to search the Scriptures. The statement from Ellen White caused them to go back to the Bible. It appears that the statements of Ellen White then looking for Biblical support for her statement.

Jesus’ human nature

Regarding the human nature of Christ, the original QOD states, “It could hardly be contested, however, from the record of either Isaiah or Matthew, that Jesus was diseased or that He experienced the frailties to which our fallen human nature is heir. But He did bear all this. Could it not be that He bore this vicariously also, just as He bore the sins of the whole world?” (QOD, p. 59)

The men in conference identified Jesus’ humanity as a humanity in which He took our fallen nature vicariously. To state that He took our fallen nature literally would be to agree with Ellen White. Knight points out that position (of Christ’s vicariously bearing fallen human nature) is certainly set forth in the New Testament. Nor was it the one held by Ellen White. “Thus according to Ellen White, at the incarnation Christ actually, rather than vicariously, took upon himself ... ‘fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin.’”

Note the wording used here, “Thus according to Ellen White...” This again indicates that she is the final and authoritative voice on doctrinal matters. One will not find a statement such as hers in all of the New Testament. In this statement, Ellen White indicates that fallen human nature has been defiled by sin. She believed that this is humanity that Jesus took upon Himself. Unlike the authors of QOD, Knight prefers the wording developed by the church’s mission, such as the statement. This statement places the church squarely outside the evangelical Christian community.

The word “imparted” is a word common to Catholic and Eastern Orthodox expressions of the Christian faith. According to The American Heritage Dictionary it means “to grant a share of” or “bestow.” “Imputed righteousness,” therefore, means that a person receives a portion of, or a gift of righteousness. It is external and not intrinsic to that person’s identity. The word “impair” means “to diminish or render less.” “Imputed righteousness” indicates that believers stand perfectly redeemed before the Father, in Christ Jesus, as the Holy Spirit guides them in living a sancifying life. God sees their righteousness as intrinsic to their identity in Christ. It is not a bestowal or gift which is applied externally and can be removed. It is part of a Christian’s identity as a born-again child of God.

Knight indicates that justification is what Christ does for his people, and sanctification is what Christ does in his people. With this simple wording, all Christians would agree. However, the Adventist belief of living perfected lives without a Mediator in the end-times is not in alignment with historic Christian belief. This belief meshes with the idea of imparted righteousness: a person becomes morally law-abiding and righteous until he becomes perfect.
For the Seventh-day Adventist, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. However, in Protestant evangelicalism, what is done in us is as integral to salvation as what is done for us. 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In spite of the inconsistency of the church in disciplining its workers for noncompliance, local church treasurers are indispensable to the local pastor and his nominating committees to verify eligibility for any position of influence. Perhaps you are familiar with many stories in Adventist books and magazines claiming the promises of Malachi 3 for our day and circumstance. Exciting stories abound from pen and pulpit of how God miraculously intervenes exclusively for the honest tithetaker. For example, accounts depict a summer harvest that devastated all the crops in a certain area but stopped short at the tithers’ fields. Claiming such promises and miracles, why would a farmer even think of buying any crop insurance? Better yet, why would the General Conference operate an insurance corporation for charging premiums to their various church entities throughout the world? Why would a local church board find it financially sound to insure their church structure from any losses? Jesus said, “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45 NIV). The Gospel does not include making “principles” out of old covenant rituals. Why, then, make tithing principles but not all the old covenant directives? Importantly, old covenant tithing is not mandated anywhere in the New Testament.

A royal tax

As may be learned from 1 Samuel 8:15,17, tithing could also be a royal tax which the king could exact and give to his officials. This ambiguity of the tithe, as a royal due on the one hand and as a sacred donation on the other, is to be explained by the fact that temples to which tithes were assigned were royal temples (cf. esp. Amos 7:13), and as such, the property and treasures in them were put at the king’s disposal. In Genesis 14:20 Abraham gives a tithe (after his battle with the four kings of the north) to Melchizedek the king-priest of Shalem, and in Genesis 28:22 (cf. also Amos 4:4) Jacob vows to pay a tithe at Beth-El, the “royal chapel” of the Northern Kingdom (Amos 7:13). The mention of specifically these two “royal temples” in connection with the tithe is not a coincidence. It seems that these two temples stand out in history of every individual who has ever lived on earth and has been recorded.

God’s love and justice have been challenged by Satan and his hosts. The archdeceiver and enemy of all righteousness has made it appear that God is unjust. Therefore in infinite wisdom God has determined to resolve every doubt forever. He does this by making bare before the entire universe the full story of sin, its inception and its history. It will then be apparent why He as the God of love and of justice must ultimately reject the uninformed, who have allied themselves with the forces of rebellion.

The Investigative Judgment is the judgment of believers as Christ and his angels pore over the books in the heavenly sanctuary. The finding sacrificial system in Adventism is actually a judgment of God’s ways. Satan is the challenger, and God must answer him for the universe to understand that God is correct in his judgments. God must make sure everyone is completely ignorable. In addition to the love and must remove every doubt forever. It appears that God’s good works are to be judged as well.

The untransformation

The Seventh-day Adventists went through a major transformation in 1957. With the publication of Questions on Doctrine, they attempted to align themselves with evangelical Christians.

In 2004, the church may be on the verge of an undoing of that transformation, resulting in a reversal of all that the original QOD accomplished. Jan Paulsen, President of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist church, gave an address to the church leaders in May of 2002. His presentation, The Theological Landscape, indicated much of what Knight has written in the annotated Edition.

Paulsen makes these following statements:...we are Christians of a very specific identity...are becoming more recognizeable as “Christians” than we are as Seventh-day Adventist Christians...I am speaking about our readiness to protect our identity. Has our stand on ecumenism changed?...And we have stated openly our reasons...There is no change in our being separate; neither do we need to change our basic prophetic speculation...

I underscore again that it is vital that we keep our separate identity...And we continue to see ourselves as the historical remnant gathering the faithful remnant from any and all corners to the purposes of God.

Some would have us believe that there have been significant shifts in recent times in regard to doctrines that historically have been at the heart of Seventh-day Adventism. Let no one think that there has been a change of position in regard to this [unique historical SDA doctrines].

Paulsen’s address was difficult for many “evangelical” Adventists. It stated, in effect, that the church is not an evangelical church. George Knight’s annotations in the “republished” QOD support Paulsen’s idea of separation and uniqueness. Knight has demonstrated several times that, “Ellen G. White is the final voice and authority in Adventism, the judgment is actually not a vindication of believers; it is a vindication of God Himself. This idea is presented in the original QOD and not questioned by Knight. If God alone were concerned, there would certainly be no need of records. But that the inhabitants of the whole universe, the good and evil angels, and all men who ever lived on this earth might understand His love and His justice, the life history of every individual has ever lived on earth has been recorded...God’s love and justice have been challenged by Satan and his hosts. The archdeceiver and enemy of all righteousness has made it appear that God is unjust. Therefore in infinite wisdom God has determined to resolve every doubt forever. He does this by making bare before the entire universe the full story of sin, its inception and its history. It will then be apparent why He as the God of love and of justice must ultimately reject the uninformed, who have allied themselves with the forces of rebellion.

The church leadership was not transparent nor straightforward and was definitely one-sided to appease the evangelicals. In a word, they were deceptive.

The original Questions on Doctrine cannot be trusted as an official doctrinal statement from the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The Annotated Edition, published by a university as part of a collection of early “heritage” documents, shows that the church has relegated this volume to the status of an historical relic. Apparently, the church has not even understood the wording of QOD in his introduction; however, he has
Growing in Jesus
CONTINUED FROM BACK

lose the completion and fulfillment of relating to others whose gifts serve us. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31) Sin and evil isolate; the Holy Spirit, however, unites us in Jesus. We are intended to function in fellowship, and our own life in the Spirit is limited when we absent ourselves from others.  

A third building block of a new life in Christ is becoming involved in a small group with whom we can study, pray, and be accountable. We have found that prayer and sharing in the context of mutual Bible study with fellow Christ-followers is a completely different experience from similar activities in our Adventist past. Formerly, true honesty with other Adventists was usually not possible because personal information would often be remembered and would color others’ opinions of us. In a small group of people who truly love Jesus, it is possible to share our struggles and to receive regular prayer and support. Being accountable to a few people who guard our secrets and love us in the Lord greatly enhances spiritual and personal growth.

These three commitments—regular Bible study, worship at a small group—begin to make us aware of the flaws in our personal or public inquiry into this doctrinal pillar is done at our own peril. From 1859 to the late 1870s, Adventists did not have a doctrine on tithing as it is known today; instead, they advocated a plan known as “systematic benevolence.” It was designed for church members from 18 to 60 years of age that owned property. Also, men and women had different rate schedules for suggested giving. The Good Samaritan, an exclusive magazine for the SB plan, was published to promote this endeavor. Ellen White wrote this plan her full endorsement. At first, local churches had complete control of the SB funds; however, the growing church hierarchy soon seized upon these liberties. Interestingly, it was Dudley Cannaught, Adventism’s most notable heretic, that championed the current doctrine of tithing in the mid-1870s. Ellen White gave wholehearted approval to this plan that projected increased revenue from every income category. One of the major differences in these two plans was the systematic benevolent funds could also be used for local church expenses. The tithe funds, on the other hand, were restricted for ministerial salaries and for various levels of administrative costs. Another largely overlooked and/or ignored aspect of tithing in our economy is the issue of unequal sacrifice. For example, a tither earning merely $1,000,000 per year has a much greater financial burden for the basic needs of life than the tither earning $100,000 per year (even flat tax proponents and the IRS allow an exemption for low income). Old Testament tithing codes made provision for public welfare, temple maintenance, support for priests and other professional personnel, theocratic government expenses, festal celebrations, and so forth. It is important to note that there never was a monetary tithe (i.e., salaries were exempt). Only crops and animals came under the various tithing regulations. It is most surprising to many Christians that a large segment of the Hebrew people did not tithe at all. For example, farm hands did not tithe. Furthermore, occupations like fishermen, construction workers, lumbermen, weavers, handi-
Proclamation!

As I studied, it felt like a veil was being lifted and I was beginning to understand the grace more clearly, I realized that as an Adventist, I was brought up holding onto the Old Covenant, making it difficult for me to embrace the New Covenant.

I started my task of “investigating” whether one was a true prophet. “Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

In the New Covenant, God said, “I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10). I learned that, just as the Sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is the sign of remembrance in the New Covenant (1Cor 11:23-26). Instead of the Sabbath being the “seal” in the end time (as SDAs are taught), we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, making us God’s children who are guaranteed eternal life (2 Cor 1:21,22 and Gal 4:6).

As I studied, I felt like a veil was being lifted and I was beginning to understand God’s grace more clearly. I realized that, as an Adventist, I was brought up holding onto the Old Covenant, making it difficult for me to embrace the New Covenant. And if I couldn’t fully embrace and live in the New Covenant, I could never be completely free in Christ to have a relationship with Him in which to grow and experience Him to the fullest. It was at that point that I was convicted to leave the Adventist church. So in early 1998, I visited a “Sunday” church—Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands—for the first time. What a blessed experience it was to worship with other seekers and growing children of God! I never went back to the Adventist church after that first visit.

Although it was very difficult to cut ties with the denomination that had been such a huge part of my life, God led me to the support of others who had walked a similar road out of Adventism. He also gave me the privilege of being part of the first “Former Adventist Fellowship” group to be started. Through His Holy Spirit He has helped me to continue to grow and mature in Him through the biblical teachings of the churches of which I have been blessed to be a part. Now I look forward to the privilege of encouraging others through the editing of Proclamation, whose goal is to lead seekers, like I once was, to the truth of Who God is.

Pastor praises God

Praise God, for He has done great work in your life to tell us the truth which was hidden from our predecessors before SDA. This is the work of the Holy Spirit of God in you in order to write, and I want you to know that that is what I was doing in the New Covenant, and how the Sabbath, which included the Holy Spirit, was brought to me. I was very surprised at what I was reading, but I was certainly glad to know what was wrong with SDAS’s false claim. I have many relatives who are SDAS’s in this part of the world. My concern is to help them to know the truth. I believe the Holy Spirit will wake them up and help them to know the truth. Thank you for your letter. God is in my world. Prophet in Solomon Islands

Proclaimation!

Frazzled nerves and sleeping pills

I have read your January/February 2004 Proclamation! magazine. I am amazed, not at new revelations, but at how people like you can spend so much time and energy attacking the Seventh-day Adventist Church. With all that energy, you could start your own health facility, or better yet, a community service center. So why would you waste all this time? What possible satisfaction do you get? If you have reason to disagree, why don’t you start your own church? I think you would attract a much greater following. I see no spiritual attraction to any message you have because of your tactics. How can I know how to live in almost every situation? I was with one inner hate and anger, whose nerves are frazzled, is on tranquilizers, and sleeps only with the help of sleeping pills. For whatever reason you have for this behavior, I’m sure you have convinced yourself its all for your own good.

Leaving means losing job

I have to say that there are enough issues within Adventism that I no longer wish to be called one, and unfortunately I have a bigger issue since I work at the Review & Herald. I cannot leave the church without leaving my job as well. I need prayers, but more than that I need your support. The faith to follow the guidance of God would be better. I just want you to thank you for (the) materials which give hope to those of us who leave corporate Adventism. I’m on my way out – Lord willing.

No longer Adventist

My brief foray into Adventism began when I met my wife. She was adamant that she would not marry someone who was not an Adventist. Although I had been brought up a Christian and had attended an Anglican Church for most of my youth, I was not active in any religious organization. I did the “Bible Study” in which I had raised many questions which went unconcerned.

I am now a Christian. My wife now accepts me for who I am, and accepts my beliefs although she is still a practicing Adventist. She has recently been admitted that her husband was wrong on her part. I told her that if I hadn’t been forced to investigate what I felt were falsehoods being perpetrated by the church, I would not be the person I am today. Although I attend an SDA church, I have informed the pastor of my religious beliefs and have requested that my name be removed from the members list.

Thans, and keep up the good work.

Not deluded

For some time your publication Proclamation! has been coming to my mailbox, however, it has gone unread. I am requesting that my name be removed from your mailing list. As a former 12 year member of the SDA church, I would not be the person I am today if I wasn’t allowed to investigate what I was reading, but I was certainly glad to know what was wrong with SDAS’s false claim. I have many relatives who are SDAS’s in this part of the world. My concern is to help them to know the truth. I believe the Holy Spirit will wake them up and help them to know the truth. Thank you for your letter. God is in my world.
Dear Sir, Praise the Lord! I have received the book Sabbath in Christ on 15th August, 2003 with thankfulness. I am very appreciative of your attention. The book will help me to develop my ministry and will become a reference on my job as a radio programmer. Once again, thank you very much. May God bless our ministry together.

God displeasing behavior

The term “displeasing behavior” is a source of great pride and comfort for me. At bed with the realization that your paycheck is related to discounting a sincere Christian woman who spent her entire adult life helping to assist the salvation of her fellow human beings. Try as I will, I cannot imagine anything more God displeasing behavior.

Editor’s note: Dr. Ratlaff has received no compensation for his work in Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

I especially appreciated the articles on abortion by Dr. Fredericks. While the books were in review in Crisis and The Church Doctrine of SDAs) and have gone over your book on the Witnesses enclosed, but I thought you are to be congratulated on the quality of your work. As I grew up through the Adventist boarding schools, I claimed in my mind that I knew what it meant to be an Adventist. Truthfully, I knew very little. Anyone with knowledge of the Bible could have sneered at me because of my weakness and understanding of the Word of God. Many of my friends were just like me. As time went on, I got stuck and earned about hearing about Ellen G. White. Why do “they” talk so much about her and not the Word of God? I never really rejected her writings; I just ignored them and tried to explain to many of my Christian friends that Mrs. White really didn’t matter—and left it at that. I have recently (after many talks from friends who have left the church) decided to find out the truth. Dr. R. E. White was and what the controversy was all about, and once and for all make a choice. I have read your two books in Crisis and The Church Doctrine of SDAs) and have gone over your website as well as many others. I have also given equal time to websites and books sup-

Editor’s note: Yes Appreciate every issue of Proclamation!

I have been reading your material since your first book was published in 1990 and I also appreciate every issue of Proclamation! For many years before your ministry there was not much good current material on SDA. In the last edition (4th, 2002) of my book Cutts and the Occult your ministry and books are listed. I just received the March/April issue of Proclamation! and especially appreciated Dr. Streffling’s artic- le “Marian Views vs. Christ’s Deity”. I have enclosed a Deity of Christ booklet that was republished by Witness Inc. Finally, I noticed the letter from a former SDA who “found the truth” in Jehovah’s Witnesses. What a tragedy! I don’t know if you have seen my book on the Witnesses entitled: “An Unexpected Journey” which I thought that you might like to have a copy. I have enclosed a review of it on Amazon.com. I was saved out of the Jehovah Witness at the age of 19. Start the good work!

Positions are contrary to my own

I have come to find out that some of the positions you hold are quite contrary to my own understandings. Carrying out of Adventism, I dug deeply and held to the position of “a thus saith the Lord,” and so it is now. While I hardly do not wish to talk about it. I want to move on.

I have been converted at the age of 18, and through the age of 17. Continue the good work!

positions have remained the same. Aside from that I have little affini-

Cristine Cole is the copy editor for Proclamation. She and her hus-
band have two sons and reside in Scottsdale, Arizona. She enjoys playing piano for her church’s worship band and is active in women’s Bible study.
Meeting Jesus challenges everything we thought we knew. This encounter overturns our beliefs, changes our identities, and calls us to new commitments. It is the most shattering and freeing event ever we experience. The Bible becomes a living book, vibrant with reality which its author, the Holy Spirit, reveals to us as we learn to live by His direction. At first, these new understandings demand all our attention as we begin to embrace our security in Christ and let go of heresies we cherished before the love of Jesus awoke us to truth. As time goes on, however, we must continue to live and work and even suffer; We feel that life's demands threaten to eclipse our new relationship with Jesus, and we feel pulled back into our old habits of coping. Sometimes the resistance we feel from loved ones paralyzes us, and we stop making progress. If Sabbath rest in Jesus is real, though, it has to work at the points where our lives are most out-of-control. As long as we cling to our “right” to control our own affairs, our daily concerns will dominate us, and we will not live in the peace and hope that Jesus said would be ours.

Surrendering our struggles and desires to Jesus, however, is not possible unless we commit to spending time in God's word and continue to choose to praise Jesus in all our circumstances. He has lived a human life on earth; He has experienced temptation and physical, mental, and spiritual suffering that is foreign to us. We can trust Him to walk with us through our trials and into the unseen future. We can lean on His strength as we submit to wearing His yoke. In this issue of Proclamation! we are introducing two features. One is called “Stories of Faith”, and it will highlight individuals’ accounts of God’s leading them to truth and to deeper walks with Him. Our copy editor Cristine Cole has written our first faith story; you will meet her on page 3. The other new feature is called “Living With the Spirit”. This column will examine ways to deepen our trust and our relationships with Jesus as we embrace our new identities in Christ. I invite any of you who wish to submit your faith stories or your experiences in growing with Jesus—or your articles on doctrinal or other subjects of interest to people with Adventism in their backgrounds—to send your manuscripts to the address on this page.

This issue also features two authors new to Proclamation! Steve Pitcher and Dennis Fischer. Steve has written a review of the newly republished Questions on Doctrine (QOD) with annotations by Adventist historian George Knight. The original QOD published in 1857 tells off print and electronic versions. Steve is a watchtower Adventist who was a watch-watcher. Steve’s article, which contains some little-known background about Martin’s ongoing concerns about Adventism as well as current statements by General Conference president Jan Paulsen, is unique and powerful in its exposé of the corporate deception practiced by the church in response to Martin’s original research. Dennis’s article presents a history of the practice of tithing beginning with Israel, continuing through the development of the church, and culminating in a new covenant understanding of what belongs to God.

I praise God for this opportunity to edit Proclamation! and to share with all of you the singular experience of discovering Jesus and the security of our salvation through His finished work. I also have deep gratitude to Dale Ratafia, whose vision launched this magazine and whose books gave me the understanding I needed to embrace the gospel fully.

—Colleen Tinker, editor
Growing in Jesus
Colleen Tinker

Almost exactly six years ago, we wrote a letter to our Adventist church and asked that we be removed from membership. We were astonished by our newly-discovered freedom in Christ, and writing that letter culminated an intense three years of studying and searching for truth and of praying to know God’s will. When we said good-bye to Adventism, we felt as if we were jumping off a cliff into an unseen, unknowable void. Only after we began our free fall did the miracle happen: God caught us in his arms. His grip has not loosened, and he has brought us, as the Shaker hymn says, into “the valley of love and delight.”

That valley, though, is new territory. It has shadowed places where we must walk, and the terrain is often surprising—even daunting. Yet the Holy Spirit never leaves us, and we never navigate our journey alone.

During the past six years we have learned that walking away from Adventism—or any other entanglement—Involves several years of discovering a new identity, learning new ways to live and worship, and deepening in Jesus. For most of us, this new life resembles Romans 7:6: “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit that the first is regular, inductive Bible study. The Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and thoroughly equips us for every good work.” (2 Timothy 1:16) The Holy Spirit that lives in us after we accept Jesus will teach us the Bible He inspired when we ask Him to guide our study. The Bible is our standard by which we measure every teaching and idea. We can confidently expect the Holy Spirit to reveal Biblical truth to us when we want to know the truth and when we ask Jesus to show it to us.

The Bereans received special commendation for their faith in the Bible’s authority and for their commitment to regular, in-depth study: “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” (Acts 17:11) Only when we immerse ourselves in the word of God will we fill ourselves with God’s wisdom and become able to discern the often subtle distinctions between truth and deception. By studying scripture, we learn to recognize the Holy Spirit’s prompting and teaching, and we grow in our ability to know God’s will for us.

The second thing we see as essential is finding a healthy church. When we are born of the Spirit, God himself takes responsibility for our transformation from sinners into saints. (Romans 6:22) The answers would demonstrate to him whether the SDA church was a cult, an evangelical Christian denomination, or a heterodox sect. make sure he was representing their theological positions correctly.

He received feedback from some Adventists that his portrayal was inaccurate. He requested a representative group of leaders to meet with him regarding a series of questions he had developed. The answers would demonstrate to him whether the SDA church was a cult, an evangelical Christian denomination, or a heterodox sect. The individuals that were involved from the Seventh-day Adventist church included LeRoy Edwin Froom, Walter E. Read, and Roy Alan Anderson. T.E. Urruh, president of the East Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, spoke with Reuben R. Figiuh, General Conference president (1954-1966) who, in the summer of 1955, formally approved the conferences already underway.

Adventist theological waters had been occasion-ally stirred up over various issues prior to 1957, but it was then that a storm began which rages to this day. The explanations of four doctrines that almost instantaneously caused major rifts between now-warring factions within the church were: 1) The statement of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, 2) The relation-ship between grace and works in salvation, 3) The deity of Jesus Christ and...