

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, INC Proclamation!

VOLUME 5
ISSUE 2
MARCH
APRIL
2004

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

Review of republished *Questions on Doctrine (Annotated Edition)*: Old wounds healed by annotations

Stephen D. Pitcher

The groundbreaking volume, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine (QOD)*, has been out of publication for over 40 years. It was originally published in 1957 as a joint effort between the Seventh-day Adventist church and some evangelical Christians, namely, Walter R. Martin, Donald Gray Barnhouse and George R. Cannon.

History

Martin was preparing a book, *Rise of the Cults*, that would have included the Seventh-day Adventist church as a non-Christian cult. He made direct contact with individuals within the church to

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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. Unruh, president of the East Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, spoke with Reuben R. Figuhr, General Conference president (1954-1966) who, in the summer of 1955, formally approved the conferences already underway.

Adventist theological waters had been occasionally 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 atonement of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, 2) The relationship between grace and works in salvation, 3) The deity of Jesus Christ and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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.

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Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

MISSION

To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

MOTTO

Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

MESSAGE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast."
Ephesians 2:8,9



Growth through surrender

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 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 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 His rest doesn't make our lives different where we really struggle, then we are no better off as Christ-followers than we were as deceived, self-protective spiritual prisoners.

As we learn to live in Jesus, our great challenge is surrender. The Holy Spirit Who indwells us 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 is to release our tight control on our circumstances. When our Father places His work or His will before us, we must trust Him to provide the strength and courage we need to embrace it. As long as we cling to our "right" to control our lives, 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 experi-

enced temptation and physical, mental, and spiritual suffering that far exceeds what he asks of 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 1957 fell out of print after it served its purpose in convincing cult watcher Walter Martin that Adventism was truly an evangelical denomination. 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 exposure 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 Ratzlaff whose vision launched this magazine and whose books gave me the understanding I needed to embrace the gospel fully.

—Colleen Tinker, editor

If Sabbath rest in Jesus is real, though, it has to work at the points where our lives are most out-of-control.

Proclamation!

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Published by Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.
PO Box 11587, Glendale, AZ 85318
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Seeking God with all my heart

Cristine 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, where 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, when still in early 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 contented Adventist, fully believing I was privileged to be a part of the "remnant church."

While in 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, International (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 to find out 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 which 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 Most Holy Place, which the veil covered in the temple, until October 22, 1844, and then only to

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start His task of “investigating” whether one was good enough to be saved. Romans 8:34 says, “Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

It is clear from this verse that when Christ went to heaven, he went straight to the right hand of the Father and is interceding for us—not “investigating” us. The teaching of the Investigative Judgment did not agree with the Bible!

Providentially, God placed another Adventist lady, Geneva Chinnock, in that same Bible study, who also noticed the same inconsistencies I did. She shared with me that she had been reading Desmond Ford’s study on the Investigative Judgment and that it was clear that the doctrine was not Biblical. After reading Ford’s study, I also came to the same conclusion.

That opened up many questions for me about the Adventist church. If the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment was not Biblical but was taught extensively by Ellen G. White, the church’s prophet, was she a true prophet? I then read Ronald Numbers’ book, *Prophetess of Health*. That brought up serious questions regarding White’s integrity. At that point I was able to intellectually let go of the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment and the idea that Ellen G. White was a true prophet; however, still wanting to be an Adventist, I thought to myself, “I will never let go of the Sabbath doctrine.”

Wouldn’t you know, Geneva Chinnock then shared with me another book she had been given! This one was Dale Ratzlaff’s book, *Sabbath in Crisis*. Before I read it, I remember praying to God to keep me from believing anything false. Once I started reading it, I could not put it down! I started to see Christ in a new light. I learned that the Sabbath was only a shadow pointing to Christ (Col 2:16,17) and the rest I could have in Him (Heb 4:9,10) when I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior.

What an eye-opener for me! I was beginning to understand that Christ completed the work of salvation for me *on the cross* and that any good works I did were a result of my love for Jesus and the changed life I had in Him. I also learned later that I will receive rewards for the good works I do, but my salvation as a believer is eternally secure (1 Cor 3:10-15)! What a load off of my shoulders! *Sabbath in Crisis* also introduced to me the fact that there was an Old Covenant and a 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 BSF. 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 and became inadequate and obsolete 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 SDA’s 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 blessed me with 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. !

BRING YE ALL THE TITHES INTO THE STOREHOUSE

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 tithe, 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

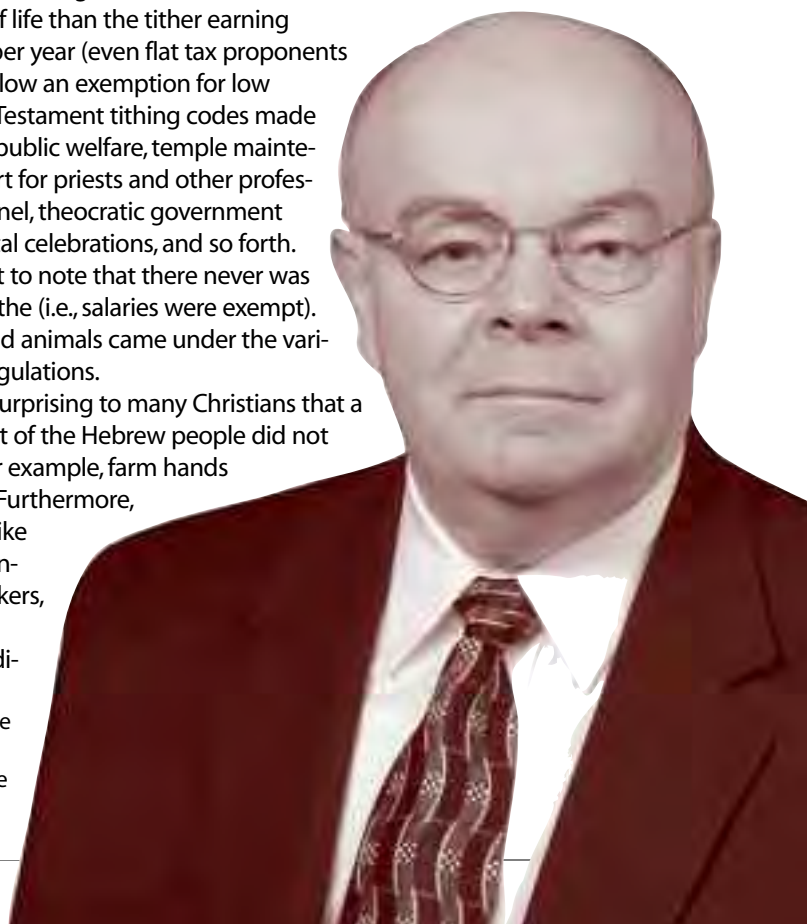
Interestingly, it was Dudley Canright, Adventism’s most notable heretic, that championed the current doctrine of tithing in the mid-1870s. Ellen White gave wholehearted approval to this plan that projected increased revenue from every income category. One of the major differences in these two plans was 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 \$10,000.00 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 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-

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TITHING

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.

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 what we call the professional fields today. The Levites not only did not tithe, but Israel's tithes supported 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 tithe to 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 practice 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 ongoing sacrificial system in place. 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."²

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 intervened exclusively for the honest tithe-payer. For example, accounts depict a summer hailstorm that devastated all the crops in a certain area but stopped short at the tither's 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 a principle 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, 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, 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 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 traditions have an etiological slant.

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 traditions are mainly attached to the south. As is well known, the kings controlled the treasures of palace and temple alike (I Kings 15:18; II Kings 12:19; 18:15),

a fact which is understandable since they were responsible for the maintenance of the sanctuary and its service of the court (cf. Ezekiel 45:17, etc.). It stands to reason that the tithe, which originally was a religious tribute, came to be channeled to the court and was therefore supervised by royal authorities. This royal management of temple funds is actually attested in II Chronicles 31:4 where Hezekiah is said to organize the collection and the storage of the tribute including the tithe.

The rendering of tithes of property was common all over the Ancient Near East. God used a system with which his people would be familiar and which they would fully utilize in their culture and economy. In converting grain to money, a fifth had to be added by the process. No conversion to money was allowed for animals. Some tithe was actually eaten in a chosen place annually (see Deut. 14:22). In contrast to the common view, there is no real contradiction between Nehemiah 10:28, which says that "the Levites are collecting the tithe in all the cities," and Malachi 3:10, Nehemiah 12:44; 13:12, etc. which speak of the people bringing tithes to the storehouses. The latter statements mean that people made their contribution, not that the people brought the tithes with them in the literal sense of the word. According to Mesopotamian practice, the temple authorities were responsible for the transportation of the tithe, and there is no reason to think the same practice should not have prevailed in Judah, especially when this tradition is explicitly stated in Nehemiah 10:38. On the other hand, it is possible that the smaller Judean farmers brought their tithes with them to Jerusalem. There were different tithing locations and procedures in various time frames in the Old Testament, so there was no one standard method of paying tithe.

Malachi's injunction

In order to understand the tithing injunction in the book of Malachi, it is important to understand the severity of the problems in his day including many Israelites having foreign women, the prevalence of drought, famine, blighted crops, and so forth. People met these problems with spiritual lethargy and indifference. They had forgotten God and treated him with dishonor. In this crisis, God spoke to the entire nation through Malachi, (Malachi 3:9,10) to bring the "whole tithe" (NIV) or "all the tithes" (KJV) into the storehouses. Temple officials picked up the tithes on the threshing floor when needed and/or had storage space. In addition, God made a specific promise to those responding to his call at this time, guaranteeing that he would prevent crop failure by pest, drought, and disease (Malachi

3:11). 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.³

From the foregoing, it might seem that the tithe was an obligatory tribute, as is actually stated in Deuteronomy 14:22. However, the tithe was also a kind of vow or voluntary gift. Thus Jacob's tithe in Genesis 28 is clearly linked to a vow, and by the same token Abraham gives tithes to Melchizedek of his own free will (Genesis 14:19-20). Amos also mentions the tithe within the framework of voluntary offerings (Amos 4:4-5). The law of tithe in Leviticus 27:32-33 occurs in a chapter dealing with sacred free gifts of various kinds (the firstlings there, verses 26-27, is an exception to the rule: these gifts cannot be dedicated since they are holy by virtue of their birth as firstlings). Tithing went through different changes and rules as God, culture, and the economy dictated.

During the intertestamental period, the tithing codes added even the most unimportant crops such as thyme, dill, cumin, mustard, pepper, caper, and mint to be meticulously calculated. Jesus mentioned these practices in Matthew 23:23, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin..." Obviously, Jesus was not impressed with their legalism. Christ taught the radical concept of common ownership for his followers to enable the Gospel to become the central focus in their lives. The early Christians trusted each other with their pooled resources. Materialism was not their bondage; Christ was their all-sufficient Savior. The Lord abundantly blessed their love for the Gospel. Earthly goods could not separate them from their Redeemer, and Christianity spread like wildfire.

It took almost three centuries before the early church fathers reintroduced tithing. The Emperor Constantine the Great, in appreciation for his baptism and his cure of leprosy at the hands of Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, A. D. 314-336, developed ecclesiastical and civil laws which required support for the church. Constantine further legalized Christianity in A. D. 321 with the first Sunday law allowing believers to celebrate a weekly Easter. Furthermore, he gave the church vast properties in Judea, Greece, Asia, Africa, and other places. The Apocrypha was especially influential in upholding tithing and almsgiving as having healing and saving power. "For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin" (Tobit 12:9). Belief in the redeeming power of almsgiving was so strong that

TITHING

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TITHING

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 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 uninterruptedly from the beginning of time.⁴ Selden contended that the Church of England had the legal right to collect tithes, but not the Biblical right. Due to his tithing 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 tithing back in the church, legalism took a giant leap forward. The old adage that "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."⁵ Soon after the Reformation, there were peasant revolts known as "tithe wars" against compulsory tithing. In the United States, in 1876, Thomas Kate began a movement which was actually organized as The Layman Company dedicated to encourage tithing in America. This modern tithing movement has grown tremendously ever since, until today we witness the phenomenon of whole denominations, such as the Mormons and the Adventists, building their spiritual life around the practice of tithing.⁶ Mormons have the most successful tithing statistics in America. They claim that their members currently pay 7.5 percent of their incomes in tithe. Early Adventist pioneers believed, like Zwingle, that the tithing laws are not binding on Christians. However, don't expect to read this fact in the next issue of the *Adventist Review*. Recent articles have given the reader the impression that Adventists have always believed in tithing as we know it today. The official history of the Adventist Church has been heavily rewritten.

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 money. 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). We give because Christ gave to us first. The Christian simply gives because he has been given and forgiven 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 transcendence of the Pharisaical 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."⁷ 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. 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 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. With Spirit-led giving, the Christian no longer yearns 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

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, pp. 1287-89, Review and Herald Publishing Association; Washington, D. C., 1966.
2. Lukas Vischer, *Tithing in the Early Church*, p. viii, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1966.
3. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Tithe, pp. 1156-62, Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem Ltd. Israel. Printed in Israel.
4. John Selden, *The Historie of Tithes*, Printed in London, England, 1618.
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6. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

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 the insights we've gleaned.

Living by the Spirit

Verses 8b through 9 say, "For apart from law, 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 then? Aren't the commandments 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 himself to Moses in person, and he put his physical presence among them in the form of 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 to convict 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 awoke 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 insight 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.

If you would like to join us in our Bible studies, you will find our study guides and notes on the website given below. **!**

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Review of republished QOD CONTINUED FROM FRONT

the Trinity and 4) the human nature of the incarnate Christ.¹

Accomplishment of the original *Questions 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

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."

church. Many evangelical Christians may no longer look on Adventists as fellow evangelicals, while those inside the denomination may find greater acceptance from their fellow Adventists rather than being referred to as "disaffected brethren" or "ultra-conservatives."

Fast forward

The history leading up to the current republication of QOD has yet to be fully compiled. Within the Seventh-day Adventist church those in agreement with and opposition to QOD have spoken freely (and sometimes hotly) in the forty-six years since publication. Martin had recognized that the Adventist church of the 1980's was not the same as that of the 1950's, with which he had dealt originally. The controversies surrounding Desmond

Ford and his lengthy study of the Investigative Judgment², as well as Walter T. Rea's study of the plagiarism of Ellen G. White³ 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?

W. Richard Leshar, vice-president of the General Conference, responded to Martin's letter on April 29, 1983. In that letter, Leshar 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 are in harmony with the views expressed in *Questions on Doctrine*.⁴

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 1950's, 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 stands behind its 1957 statement and could be considered a Christian denomination.

He was finally given a face-to-face meeting with William G. Johnsson, 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 representative Johnsson on national television to republish QOD.⁵ That particular program caused

quite a stir within Adventism, opening afresh some of the wounds that had healed since 1957. In answering Martin's questions, William Johnsson consistently held up the *Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*. Martin was not receiving a frank "yes" or "no" in answer to his questions regarding the church's position on QOD. The unanswered question and the "yes" answer given by Lesher was a contradiction to Martin. This, 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 1950's.⁶

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 Andrews University, the Adventist theological seminary in the United States. The author of numerous books, he has provided clear insights to 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. Jones* (1987), *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite 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.⁷

... *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 now in a position to make a first theological conclusion regarding *Questions on Doctrine*: That the book is almost entirely made up of clear 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 this book indicates that these were not "clear restatements." However, Knight points out, when one reads QOD, one is reading traditional Adventism. Evangelicals Martin, Barnhouse, and Cannon thought they were receiving "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.

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

"... 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."

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?

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 Adventist 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. Indirectly 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 full deity of Christ, yet it was well into the 1940's that debates continued within the

church on the deity of Christ. (It wasn't until 1985 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," replacing the Adventist emendation "God over all Who rules eternally.") By the 1950's, 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 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)

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 *Daniel and the Revelation*, E. J. Waggoner, author of *Christ 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. 46)

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, unborrowed, underived." His annotation indicates:

That statement and others proved to be quite controversial and drove Adventist scholars back to their Bibles ... (p. 46)

This provides great insight into the methodology used by Adventist scholars. It was not a controversy 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 they were reading the writings 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 construed, 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 not 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." 8

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 the humanity that Jesus took upon Himself. Unlike the authors of QOD, Knight prefers the wording provided by the church's end-time messenger. This statement places the church squarely outside the evangelical Christian community. Evangelicals, whether Calvinist or Arminian, would never refer to Jesus' human nature as "fallen" or "defiled by sin."

Statements about the atonement of Christ and the nature of works

It is the question of Christ's atonement in the heavenly sanctuary as presented by QOD that caused the greatest division within the church between the so-called "historic" Adventists and the

more evangelical-leaning Adventists. The teaching of the Christian church across two millennia is that the shedding of the blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary is a complete and final sacrifice and offering which atones for the sin of humanity and appeases the wrath of God towards humanity.

The original QOD claims that the Adventist doctrine of atonement "had a wider meaning than many of their fellow Christians attached to it." (QOD p. 347, 348) This "wider" doctrine included an application of the blood in the "heavenly sanctuary" (a literal place in heaven, not just heaven itself) such that believers could appropriate it into their lives. Knight points out that the early Adventist doctrine of atonement was not wider but different. To quote Andreasen on this subject,

"But the slaying of the lamb did not in and of itself make atonement. ... The blood of the Passover lamb had to be put on the lintel and doorposts before it availed for atonement. Must a like ministrations of the blood of Christ, the true Lamb of God, also be observed? Hebrews answers this in the affirmative...." 9

As Adventist believers travel on the road of imparted character perfection, the Holy Spirit provides the believer with strength to live as a perfect human, just as Jesus lived while on earth (p. 307). 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." "Imparted 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.

Protestants would use the words "imputed righteousness." "Impute" means to attribute or ascribe something (such as wickedness or merit) to another. "Imputed righteousness" indicates that believers stand perfectly redeemed before the Father, in Christ Jesus, as the Holy Spirit guides them in living a sanctified 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 increasingly law-abiding and righteous until he becomes perfect.

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." Here 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

For the Seventh-day Adventist, what is done in us is integral to salvation as what is done for 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.

Christ's completed sacrifice and offering on the Cross. In Adventism, His blood is currently being applied in the heavenly sanctuary and appropriated by believers to complete the atonement that was only begun on the cross.

Law, works and judgment

The section of QOD titled, "The Relationship of Grace to Law and Works," is one of the few sections in the book where Knight has made no annotations. The book made some evangelical-sounding statements in this section.

Salvation is not now, and never has been, by law or works; salvation is only by the grace of Christ... 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)

Knight refers to what is done *for* us and what is done *in* us. 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 for us is salvation. What is done in us is the lifetime work of the Holy Spirit. Nothing done in us is an integral part of salvation. For Protestants, it is a benefit of having been completely saved by the blood of Jesus Christ.

In Adventist theology, the Investigative Judgment is the primary and unique doctrine of the church, not shared with any other Christian body. Based on their interpretation of the book of Daniel, Adventists believe that, beginning on October 22, 1844, Jesus entered the second phase of His atonement in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly sanctuary. This judgment, an on-going judgment of believers, results in Christ's application of His blood to those who are found faithful. Those who do not prove, through their character perfection, to be true saints of God, have their names removed from the Book of Life.

Knight shows an interesting development within Adventism regarding the nature of this judgment.

Many mid-twentieth century Adventists appear to have been fixated on judgment as condemnation. But the past fifty years have seen a growing perspective on judgment as the vindication of the saints.

Christians will have a pre-advent judgment, but the good news is that the Judge is not against them or even neutral... When the pre-advent judgment is seen from that perspective, there is no reason why any Christian should want to reject the idea. (p. 334)

Here Knight, along with most of the Adventist church, has forgotten or avoided Jesus' plain statement in John and changed the meaning of judgment. When speaking with Nicodemus about being born again, Jesus specifically refers to judgment as He says,

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18, NASB)

The common evangelical Christian belief regarding judgment is that all will be judged. Believers have already been judged in Christ Jesus, who paid for that judgment by dying on the cross in the believer's place. Evangelicals also

believe in a final judgment of believer's works, where the dross will be burned away leaving only pure gold. Within Adventism, this Investigative Judgment is specifically for the salvation of believers, separating the wheat from the chaff before Jesus can come to resurrect dead believers and translate living believers.

Knight misinterprets the evangelical understanding of judgment. He directs his statement towards those such as Barnhouse and Martin.

Of course, those with a Calvinistic, predestinarian perspective, such as Barnhouse and Martin, would find no use for a pre-advent judgment, since the results of judgment had been predetermined in the mind of God. But such a perspective overlooks the clear teaching of Daniel 7 on the pre-advent judgment of God's people being a verdict of vindication. (p. 334)

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 who have 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 impenitent, who have allied themselves with the forces of rebellion. (QOD, 420, 421)

The Investigative Judgment is the judgment of believers as Christ and his angels pore over the books in the heavenly sanctuary. The final judgment 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 understands His 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 appeared 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 church leaders in May of 2002. His presentation, *The Theological Landscape*, indicated much of what Knight has written into the Annotated Edition.

Paulsen makes these following statements:

...we are Christians of a very specific identity. ...are we becoming more recognizable 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? ... The answer, emphatically, is no. ... And we have stated openly our reasons. ... There is no change in our being separate; neither do we need to change our basic prophetic scenario.

... 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 separatism and uniqueness.

Knight has demonstrated several times that,

- Ellen G. White is the final voice and authority in doctrinal matters. Without using those words, he and others within the church unabashedly refer to her for beliefs and then attempt to find support for those beliefs from the Bible.
- The church leadership was neither 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.

Knight made a strange statement about the wording of QOD in his introduction; however, he has

demonstrated that QOD was neither a “clear restatement” nor was it “faithful to Adventist beliefs.” He uses history to counter his own statement as well as to provide insight to the doctrinal workings of this church.

To conclude, take a look at the 17th fundamental belief of the church. In part it reads,

... her [Ellen G. White’s] writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.

For those familiar with the New Testament, this sounds eerily like a verse from the book of Timothy.

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness... (II Timothy 3:16, NASB)

In reading the annotated edition, this writer became confused at times. Not only are there contradictory writings from the pen of Ellen G. White and other authors in the church, George Knight seemed to be contradictory to himself at times. There seemed to be an underlying anger in the annotations against Martin, Barnhouse, Calvinism, and Evangelicals, while Knight used every effort to bring unity back to a church in turmoil for 46 years.

Adventists and evangelicals can be thankful that the Annotated Edition has been published. Rather than being confused by the deceptive leaders of the church in 1956, we can read Knight and be sure that the church has never really changed from its historical positions. Although the majority of members are Trinitarian, the church is a haven for works-oriented, anti-Trinitarians who make symbolic gestures to other Christian groups but who do not interact spiritually as members of the body of Christ. QOD was groundbreaking. Perhaps the annotated edition will be as well. **!**

Endnotes

- ¹ Knight, George R. *Questions on Doctrine, Adventist Classic Library, Historical and Theological Introduction to the Annotated Edition*, p.xiv, Andrews University Press, 2003
- ² Ford, Desmond, *Daniel 8:14 The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*, Evangelion Press, 1980
- ³ Rea, Walter T. *The White Lie*, M & R Publications, 1982
- ⁴ Martin, Walter R.; Zacharias, Ravi, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults, Revised, Updated and Expanded Edition*, p.537, Bethany House Publishers, 2003
- ⁵ *The John Ankerberg Show*, Martin/Johnsson segments “Who Is Telling The Truth?”, 1985
- ⁶ *Adventist Currents*, October 1985. “The Travail of William Johnsson”
- ⁷ Knight, *ibid*, “Historical and Theological Introduction to the Annotated Edition,” p. xiii
- ⁸ Knight, *ibid*, p. 56, quoting White, Ellen in *The Youth’s Instructor*, V. 48, No. 50, Dec. 20, 1900
- ⁹ M.L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, pp. 16, 17, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948

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 other believers.

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 one’s 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 spiritually alive, Bible-centered church, and becoming accountable to a small group—begin to make us aware of the flaws in ourselves which we must surrender to Jesus. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church, he addressed them as “brothers,” but he said he could not address them as “spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ,” (1 Corinthians 3:1) and he chastised them for their immaturity. Once we accept Jesus, he begins to mature us in him. When we begin to experience his discipline of us

(Hebrews 12:1-12), we need to trust him with the habits and treasured defenses we may have harbored for decades. Just as we had to risk giving up our Adventist identities, even so we must continue to trust Jesus, allowing Him to replace our compulsions with His Spirit. We must surrender them to Him at the foot of the cross, knowing He has already paid the price for them. We can finally allow Him to take them from us and to heal the still-aching wounds which they covered—wounds which we had tried to ignore but which will only stop hurting when we open them to the gentle touch of Jesus. Our willingness to grow in truth and trust will determine whether or not we will stay “infants” like the Corinthians or become mature Christ-followers through whom God increasingly glorifies Himself.

Leaving Adventism is one of the most life-changing events any of us experience. The exhilaration of discovery and the risk of that decision, however, will not carry us through the rest of our lives. As we begin to live by the Holy Spirit, we must commit to continuing study, worship and honesty. When we begin to trust Jesus with our trials and dilemmas, we discover our love for Him growing. We begin to experience the reality of living in Sabbath rest every day. We discover that our life of faith brings us to that blind place of cliff-jumping over and over again, but increasingly we know Jesus will catch us when we take those steps into the unknown.

As we learn to trust the Holy Spirit’s prompting, we find our hearts healing and flourishing, and we know that God is holding us safely in the valley of love and delight. **!**

Pastor praises God

Praise God, for He has done great work in your life to tell us the truth which was hidden from our beloved brothers in S.D.A. This is the work of the Holy Spirit of God in you. I wanted to write and let you know how much I enjoy reading *Proclamation*. You had sent it to a lady who had passed it on to me to read two years ago. I still keep this copy with me to reread it over again in my study. I wasn't too surprised at what I was reading, but I was certainly glad to know what was wrong with S.D.A.'s false claim. I have many relatives who are SDA's in this part of the world. My concern is to help them to know the truth. I believe the Holy Spirit who is in you is greater than Satan, the error who is in the world.

I pray for you and the ministries that you set. Thank God for your calling.

Pastor in Solomon Islands

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. Somehow I have a mental picture of someone with 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 it's the answer to all your needs.

Grace upholds me

I want to thank you for sending me *Proclamation*. I am praying for your ministry and will be supporting it financially as well. It has been difficult to break from the indoctrination I received as a daughter of an SDA minister. I still suffer from doubt on occasion, but the grace of God is teaching and upholding me. I cannot believe how little I actually know of the Bible...so much of what I know is EGW. The Bible has become a new and exciting daily relationship. Thank you again.

A right understanding

I enjoy receiving *Proclamation!* and agree with most of what is being said. Since retire-

ment, my independent Bible Studies have increased, and I've come to understand things in a different way from the SDA indoctrination I received most of my life. Now I feel free in the Holy Spirit to explore and come to a right understanding of Scriptures and what they intended.

Letters show mental incompetence

I have been disappointed in your Letters to the Editor section of *Proclamation!* to see the ratio of supportive letters to those with a different viewpoint. In my most recent copy there were seven affirming your ministry to every one from Adventists with a divergent opinion.

What has really saddened me, though, are the types of letters you elect to publish that are not representative of the Adventists I have known in 44 years of my pastoral ministry. The letters in your most recent *Proclamation!* are from people obviously mentally disturbed or intellectually quite limited. Your first letter, "Of Plagues and Flies," 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 confused logic is difficult to understand.

Perhaps the lack of balance in the Adventists your letters portray is not by design. You may not receive mail from those who are more intellectually competent. Yet even the secular news magazines are fair 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.)

Leaving means losing job

I've concluded 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 prayer, but more than that I need the faith to follow the guidance God will give. I just want 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 much 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 unanswered.

For quite a few years now, I have not considered myself an SDA—if someone asks what religion I am, I tell them that I am a Christian. My wife now accepts me for who I am, and accepts my religious beliefs although she is still a practicing Adventist. She has recently admitted that forcing me to become an Adventist 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 SDA 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.

Thanks, 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. Revelation 12:10 labels Satan as "the accuser of the brethren." All who follow in his footsteps are following him....Am I under some sort of delusion that the church is OK? Think again....I have probably seen it all, and not through rose colored glasses, either. [But] spreading misinformation about the people and church God has used mightily in bringing the gospel to the world is not any activity that fits into the divine commission....

Before you get too critical about the church and God's messengers, you have a dire need to get the log out of your own eye first. Your magazine is so riddled with error and outright misrepresentation that it can in no way be a representation of truth...Unless you develop a love for the truth and choose to get out of the critic's seat, God will cause you to believe a lie, and it will be to your detriment. I say this with Christian love.

Diet is idol

My mother-in-law has changed from being a woman who used to love to talk about Jesus to one who is obsessed w/ being a vegetarian, colon cleansings, etc. Her diet has become her idol. Our pastor tried to talk with her about Adventism but made no headway. When I saw the info about your publication, I thought perhaps this would be the very thing that would

reach her. Bless you for helping so many to break the chains of bondage and be set free!

Growl of authority

Our departure from Adventist ministry was very ugly and painful for us. We were dealt with by fundamentalist mind-sets which were capable of being very unkind and even cruel. Adventists today who believe the SDA Church is one built only upon love and loving and Christ-like manners, have never felt the sharp claws extended, nor have they heard the growl of its authority when one person stands on inner principles and convictions that cross grain with what has already been established as "the official, endorsed truth!"

Your material has helped me become a better and stronger Adventist

I just want to thank you for your help and your website. I have been a Christian my whole life. I am what they call a generational Adventist. For over four generations my family has been a part of the Church. I, on the other hand, don't consider myself an Adventist purely by my genealogy. I am truly my own first generation Adventist. It is by my choice that I have claimed the title I have inherited to be a part of my life. That is what makes me an Adventist. Having said that, I want to thank you for your books and this website. 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 swayed my faith because of my weak faith and understanding of the Word of God. Many of my friends were just like me. As time went on, I got sick and tired of 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 who and what E. G. White was and what the controversy was all about, and once and for all make a choice. I have read your two books (*Sabbath in Crisis* and *The Cultic Doctrine of SDA's*) and have gone over your website as well as many others. I have also given equal time to websites and books supporting E. G. White (this is the proper thing to do to understand an issue). I have found that not only is this material "old news" nothing has really changed from both sides. For example, Sabbath, vegetarian lifestyle, Judgment, Daniel's Prophecies, the Sanctuary, etc. So, I

went as far back as I could go up to the present. I studied how other religions came about their prophecies, and have determined that being a Seventh Day Adventist is where I should be and anyone seeking truth. I am not saved by Christ simply because I am an Adventist, but because of His sacrifice on my behalf, faith, and forgiveness of my sins. I accept the inspiration of E. G. White's writings (not that it has anything to do with me still being an Adventist. I can believe in the SDA doctrines, and have never read a single book of E. G. White). One of my favorite sections in your website is the 1919 Bible Conference. That really helped me understand a lot of what was going on back then and helped me know that E. G. White was truly inspired and a gift from God. I cannot explain in this email all that I have learned or even a little portion, but wanted to let you know that your material has helped me become a better and stronger Adventist than I have ever been....

Will become a reference on my job as a radio programmer

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 our ministry and will become a reference on my job as a radio programmer. Once again, thank so much for your kindness. May God bless our ministry together.

God-displeasing behavior

It must be a source of great pride and comfort to go to bed at night with the realization that your paycheck is related to discrediting 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 any more God displeasing behavior. C.M.E.

Editor's note: Dale Ratzlaff has received no compensation for his work in Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

I especially appreciated the articles on abortion by Dr. Fredericks

You are to be congratulated on the quality of the articles in *Proclamation*. I especially appreciated the articles on abortion by Dr. Fredericks. But it seems to me your recent issues have devoted too much space to the work in Uganda. However praiseworthy that project may be, such stories do not supply the theological guidance and spiritual support needed by those current and former Adventists with soul-searching problems such

as justification by faith, the role of Law and Gospel and the Christian Sabbath.

Unfortunately, I don't have enough funds to buy books

I am a Christian involved in Christian apologetics ministry here in the Philippines. There are thousands of Filipino Seventh-day Adventists here in our country that need to know the truth regarding Mrs. Ellen G. White's teachings. Unfortunately, I don't have enough funds to buy books exposing the SDA's false teachings. I am hoping you could send me some of your free literature which would help the Christian churches here in evangelizing the Seventh-day Adventist people. Could you send me the following books for free?...

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 *Cults and the Occult* your ministry and books are listed. I just received the March/April issue of *Proclamation!* and especially appreciated Dr. Streifling's article: "Arian 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 the Jehovah's Witnesses. What a tragedy! I don't know if you have seen my book on the Witnesses enclosed, but 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's Witnesses in 1950 at the age of 17. Continue 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. Coming out of Adventism, I dug deeply and held to the position of "a thus saith the Lord," and so it is now. I study hard! My sole reason for having left the S.D.A. Church was based entirely on the false doctrine of the Investigative Judgment, though after leaving I found other more good reasons for being gone! I bought your book on the Sabbath—but it was unacceptable to me. I was converted at the age of 18, and through my 45 years of the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath, at no time were they ever a burden to me. Quite the opposite; they were written in my heart back then and that is where they remain. Aside from that I have little affinity with the Adventist Church. Though I will be

quick to say I am also with them on the Covenants as defined by Edwin W. Reiner, if that is their position. I am hearing the same from another source....*Proclamation!* is a very interesting journal as well as challenging! I am going to continue my \$20 per month through the year....God bless you richly in your services for HIM!

A knockout publication!

Hi! I was reading the Jan/Feb '03 issue of *Proclamation!* this morning.., as usual, a knockout publication! I am so glad you have tastefully tackled the abortion issue. We're very excited about the missionary work in Uganda! What a blessing you have been as you support those in transition from Adventism out into the main body of believers in Jesus Christ. Mark and I would like to begin supporting L.A.M. every month. We have budgeted about \$20.00 a month at present and will increase it as God blesses. Thank you for your dedication and determination to follow JESUS CHRIST and Him only!

Amusing if it weren't so sad

I really do thank you for sending me *Proclamation*. I sometimes find it amusing if it weren't so sad. I notice in your letter section you never print any of my letters. In the May, June 2003 issue, I wonder just who it is preaching another gospel. You use up five pages telling me there is no Ten-Commandment law. My Bible says in three places there are. Ex. 34:28, Deu. 4:13, and 18:4. My Bible defines sin as transgression of the law. So what law is it talking about? I find it hard to believe that God wrote with his own hand something that was transitory. There was a special ark made for this covenant, and it was so sacred that Uzzah died when he touched it, and it is still in heaven as John saw it there when he was on the Isle of Patmos. Rev. 11:19 So if there is no law, there is no transgression, so Jesus might as well have stayed in heaven instead of coming to earth to save people from their sins. 1 Jn. 3:4 You put the 10-Commandment law in the same classification as the ceremonial laws, which is what Gal 4:10, Heb, 10:1 and Col. 2:16, 17 are clearly talking about. The ceremonies, especially made clear in Lev. 16, were a blueprint of what was to come. When the antitype appeared, this schoolmaster was to disappear. Col. 2:16 "Let no man judge you...of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come." The fourth commandment says, "Remember." It is rather hard to remember something that hasn't happened yet. So I'm sure you intend to keep kicking God's law aside and get as many

people as you can to do the same thing. When you receive your reward for "preaching this other gospel," which isn't going to be heaven, perhaps you will remember all the confections you went through to make the Bible say what it does not say.

They have liberated me from all my yokes

Thank you again for sending *Proclamation!* Now it is more than three years since I began studying your books and magazines. It is your writings which became my life turning point. They have liberated me from all my yokes... Please pray for me.

Believe Him, not just believe IN Him

The reasons I left the SDA church are because I felt very uncomfortable with the superior, judgmental attitudes they hold toward "non-Adventists"; they totally disregard most of the Apostle Paul's writings to the churches (about it not being about keeping the Commandments anymore, but believing in and trusting Christ).

I used to feel frustrated, hurt, and puzzled about the hateful way I was treated by some Adventists, including blood relatives and in-laws. But now I consider it a wonderful gift they gave me. I'm glad they were ugly to me because it helped me break away from my "tribal beliefs" and go on a wonderful spiritual quest, learning to experience God in a very profound, personal way which would never have been possible had I stayed in the church, worrying all the time about whether it's ok to do this on the Sabbath or that, whether it's ok to wear pants to church, whether it's ok to wear a wedding ring, always worrying about "the end of time", etc. I'm so thankful I'm free of all that...and my soul is happy!

Jesus left heaven and took on human form and came to this planet to tell us that, and I think we ought to believe Him, not just believe IN him.

Husband closed to Truth

I recently placed an order with LAM in order to learn more about SDA doctrine and Ellen White. My husband is Adventist and I am an evangelical Christian. My husband has been a committed Adventist most of our married life (23 years), and I attended church with him for approximately 10 years. I was a young believer. I was miserable and never comfortable with their teachings. I believe God protected me during that time. I quit and started attending a Bible church in 1996. I felt as though I had been set free from prison!!

I have since tried to learn as much about

the Adventist religion as possible. The more I learn and present to my husband, the deeper he gets into Ellen White and the Adventist "message". He is closed to the truth. I also have a friend, along with her husband, who has recently left the SDA church. She is also sharing with my husband as well. She just gave him some extensive material on the investigative judgment.

This is having a significant impact on our family. We have three children. Please pray with me that he will be open to the truth and will understand the freedom he has in Christ.

Thank you for your ministry. May God bless you and use you significantly in spreading His truth.

We left today

Both my wife and I formally left the SDA church today, asking the conference to delete our names from the rolls...I had been in the church 25 years, and my wife 7. We tried to minister to the local community from within the church but it was like a straitjacket for us.

When we started working to save souls outside of the church, we were castigated like criminals by the pastor, who could find no scriptural authority for doing so, and could only cite from Mrs. White's testimonies to justify his actions. He actually issued us a "summons" today to an inquisition to be held next week, at which he was planning to decide our fate.

We are saddened that we will not be worshipping alongside many good friends next week, but relieved to be out from under the yoke of bondage the organization had placed on us. Praise the Lord for opening our eyes!

Please send Proclamation!

I just returned from ...my 50th [academy] class reunion and while there, ran across a few people who would really like to come out of the SDA religion but, like myself, are having a difficult time with the Sabbath questions. (I don't have the difficulty anymore, but certainly did at one time!) Can I request that the *Proclamation!* be sent to them? I would be most appreciative.

Mail letters and donations to:

Life Assurance Ministries
PO Box 11587
Glendale, AZ 85318

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 realizes 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 embrace the freedom that Jesus bought for us, we have to learn how to live by the Holy Spirit instead of by the laws which bound us in spiritual blindness.

When we are born of the Spirit, God himself takes responsibility for our transformation from sinners into saints. (Romans 6:22, Philippians 1:6) He not only gives eternal life to our spirits, he also begins to change our mortal minds and bodies to reflect His presence in us. (Romans 8:10-11) He begins to convict us of sins and wounds which hide in our hearts and need the healing discipline of Jesus. Our responsibility, as we begin to experience these new loving confrontations about our true condition, is to learn to trust Jesus enough to face the truth he shows us. Unlike the law which overwhelmed us with guilt we could not purge (Romans 7:5), the Holy Spirit prompts us to acknowledge our flaws with his help. When we are in Christ, we do not have to look at our sins with

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 1:2)

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 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 where we can fellowship with other believers and receive sound Bible teaching. There is no substitute for functioning as a member of the body of Christ. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25) While God saves us individually, he considers all believers corporately to be his body. 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

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Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.

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