Each year our church hosts a Day Camp for primary and middle school children. This year I taught a class called “Life in the Palace”—an attempt to instruct young girls on simple manners and table etiquette.

I asked what they would do if they were eating at a friend’s house and were served something they didn’t like. The answers included things they wouldn’t do: make a face like their brother or push it away! One little girl named Kelli answered the question dramatically saying, “Oh my God, that’s terrible cooking!” She was all of 7 years old, and her words took me by surprise! I felt sad that so young a child could roll those words so easily off her lips. I was angry at the adults in her life or the TV programs she had watched that modeled this hasty phrase. I was irritated that someone had not explained to her how holy the God of the universe is and how wrong it is to speak of Him so carelessly.

Calling on God without knowing Him

Do you hear this phrase as much as I do? Have you noticed how it comes from both spiritual pagans and professing Christians in our day and age? Does it strike you as incongruent, for a God-maligning culture like ours, to be so willing to talk about God without knowing Him? Does it seem odd to you that someone who professes to take a stand for believing in and respecting the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would speak the Name of His/her God so thoughtlessly?

It’s an interesting fact that the culture in which we live is not too fond of God—at least not the God of the Bible. We repeatedly get the idea from the way people speak of Him! The media works hard to discredit Him by saying it is “the height of intolerance” even to believe in one God and “the height of arrogance” to parade Him in public! The ACLU works hard to keep God and God-words out of schools, public buildings and front yards, yet a healthy slice of our population continuously claims its “freedom of speech” to mention God in conversation without knowing Him as the one true God of heaven and earth who revealed Himself in creation, in the Bible, and through His Son.

In spite of their ignorance—like the little girl in my class—they talk about Him anyway—relentlessly and persistently! Think about it! In a crisis or accident, people call out, “Oh, my God!” If they hear bad news, good news, are surprised at something, or need a quick expletive, God is the one they bring into the conversation. Recently, I have begun to hear professing Christ-followers breathe those three words as an oath.

Does it strike you as incongruent, for a God-maligning culture like ours, to be so willing to talk about God without knowing Him?

Something is very wrong with this picture. My little student’s words reminded me about the seriousness of carelessly crying this phrase out of anger or fear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Elizabeth Inrig is director of women’s ministries at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands, California, where her husband Gary is the senior pastor. She holds a MABS degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and a D.Min from Trinity International University. She recently retired from her position as national director of women’s ministries for the Evangelical Free Church of America, and she now serves an evangelical seminary as Advisor for Women’s Ministries. She and Gary have three children and seven grandchildren.

Lips that honor GOD

Elizabeth Inrig
I’m emboldened to admit it—this sort of episode is so not me! Perhaps the surprising intensity of the emotional assault caught me off guard. Whatever the case, it seemed that all the criticism, all the demands of everyone, and the Adventist understanding that part of this ministry overtook me in an avalanche of helplessness. In fact, I felt so overwhelmed I went to bed in the middle of the day. Richard was worried.

After waking with the pillow over my head for a couple of hours, however, a persistent thought pinged my obligation.

“pray to know what is true”

Conflict struggled with self-pity, but finally, as a sort of aberration of obedience, I began to say the words: “Please help me know what is true.”

A couple more hours passed. Still feeling helpless, I began to ruminate how that the complaint, the truth I had to work with, and people depending on me to get it done. I got up and began to do the waiting tasks. By now I was able to pray more purposefully: “Please hold me in truth and root me in reality. Please be all I need.” Even though I felt emotionally spent, I was aware that reality was not as overwhelming as it felt it was. I knew deep down that I had succumbed to the temptation to overtook me in an avalanche of helpless-

ness, I sat in church last Sunday listening to our pas-

covenant. No longer is God’s command to me written in stone and kept in an ark. Jesus Himself lives in me in the person of the Holy Spirit. From the time He began to respond to me to pray to know what is true as I a

lived in my misery until the moment He washed away my shame during communion, the Holy Spirit convicted me of my sin of succumbing to helplessness instead of to Him, brought me to repentance, taught me how to live, and reminded me that I am His.

God has written His law on my heart by literally living in me. His correction and discipline are swift and immediate, and His commands to me are far more personalized than were the Ten Commandments. The law written on my heart is not other than the sovereign God of the uni-

verse—and He doesn’t leave me in my sin without immediate and personal correction and instruction. He reveals Himself to me through His Word; He teaches me His will, and He convicts me of subtle sins the law doesn’t name.

In this issue Dale Ratzlaff discusses what it means to have the law written on our hearts. Chris Badenhorst explores the basis of new covenant ethics, and Geoffrey Drew explains the basis of new sins the law doesn’t name.

As I ate the bread and drank the grape juice during communion later, the Lord Jesus washed away my lingering shame with my tears.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 identifies God as only one Being; “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

Texts such as Isaiah 45:5-6, 1 Timothy 2:5, Romans 3:30, and James 2:19 confirm that God is one. Many of us learned that Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are all fully God but we under-

stood them to be fully God as a piece of apple pie is “you” and “me” and “us,” but no one person within the Trinity is all of God while also being in relationship with each other.

This understanding is important in order for us to understand that Jesus is not a “lesser rank” than the Father or somehow only part of God. When Jesus came as our Redeemer, God came as a man, died, and defeated death. Yet God is eternal, immaterial, invisible, and omnipresent. God was not limited by Jesus’ incarnation, and lived His life on earth in submission to the Father.

“I will not leave you as Orphans” (John 14:18), cited by Jeff Purswell Copyright © 1999 by Wayne Grudem. Used by permission of Zondervan.

Gürkhan’s article on the Trinity article

“Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved on stones, came with glory, will not the ministry that brings righteousness be even more glorious? If the ministry that conduces men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in com-

parison with the surpassing glory!” (2 Co. 3:7-10).

Trinity article

“Good article on the Trinity. Our finite minds are not sharp enough nor the language adequate to clearly define the reality of the Trinity God can maintain His omnipotence and at the same time come among us in the person of Jesus Christ or indwell us by His Spirit.”

“This Godhead is there in the world, but not for our understanding; there is distinction but not separation.”

God as Father ordains our redemption, as Son comes among us as our source of redemption, and as indwelling Spirit reveals our redemption and gives us faith to believe. Thus the triune God perfectly meets the needs of the fallen sinner. Enough said.

SHADY CREEK, OREGON

L E F T  R E S P O N S E

Editor’s note: First, the Bible is clear that there is nothing such as an isolated Christian. The book of Ephesians describes how Jesus created in Himself new human lives as members of His body. In the Trinity, we are further, as stated in Hebrews 2:10, joint-heirs with Christ, to understand that Jesus is not a “lesser rank” than the Father and the Holy Spirit.

As Independent Adventists, we do not accept the religious hierarchy whose livelihood depends on you obviously left the Seventh-day Adventist church. For many years, I have had to explain how Adventists beliefs differ from biblical teachings. Further, when one has been set free, it is impossible for him not to speak of the deliverance.

Third, Life Assurance Ministries and Former Adventist Fellowship are not a “rebound religion.” Former Adventists are scattered throughout the world. Christian churches are not a rebound religion for the support and education of those questioning and leaving Adventism. It is not a church and is not a denomination. It is a final destination.

We pray that we will honor the Lord Jesus in all we say, and we pray that those who have ques-

tions and who have left Adventism will follow Him wherever He leads, allowing Him to place them in fellowship with other believers.

MAIL LETTERS AND DONATIONS TO: Life Assurance Ministries R.R. Box 905 Redlands, CA 92373
I often wonder if I am guilty of talking about myself and about my wife’s and my painful departure from the Adventist ministry with more energy than I pointed to Jesus Christ. It is my personal conviction that our central focus, energy, and attention should not be our experiences or even the doctrines with which we disagreed in the past; rather, our central focus must be Christ and His glorious Gospel. The most important Person in all the universe is Christ. Jesus is the Gospel!

Colossians 3:11 says, “Christ is ALL and is in all.” Jonathan Edwards said, “All that a Christian is, he is in and by Christ.” In Colossians 3 Paul admonishes us to set our minds, our focus, our energy upon things that are above, not on this earth. Other things are unimportant in true reality. I began my ministry as a singing evangelist in the New Jersey Conference. (While the Church insists upon using the term “evangelist,” this word is incorrect. Because the primary motive is not to win souls to Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel but to make Adventists out of those who attend the public meetings, the word “proselytize” would be more nearly accurate.) I worked with many popular ministers including George Vanderman, Bob Folkenberg, and C.D. Brooks, and I have some great memories of my work with these evangelists. I loved C.D. Brooks! I first worked with him in the first integrated series of meetings in the denominations’ history held in Newark, New Jersey. I was the white song leader/singer. One of my favorite hallelujahs was “Our God, our Help in ages past.” But I must confess that I was a “Johnny-come-lately.”

I pastored the Salem and Vineyard, New Jersey, churches as well as the church in Alexandria, Virginia, and the church- es in Sheridan and Buffalo, Wyoming. I also served as confer- ence ministerial secretary for the Wyoming Conference under Allan Vandeman, the last pastor who was for the Bozeman, Montana, Conference headquarters church.

Unique Departure
My departure from Adventist pastoral ministry is, I think, unique because it did not focus upon the controversial doc- trines so central in the departure of many Adventist minis- ters. My only issue during the time leading up to this termi- nation was the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ. It remains my primary issue today!

The Holy Spirit led me to purchase a copy of Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans. As I read it, I discovered the authentic gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! After Bonnie and I knew we were saved, I knew the gospel of the Lord Jesus was the primary message my congregation needed to hear so they, too, could smile and believe it when they sang, “Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!” For the next 18 months I preached on nothing—I repeat, nothing—but the many facets of justification by faith. I must point out that during part of this 18 month time period, the events of Glacier View were occurring in which Des Ford presented his scholarly findings about the investi- gative judgment to a panel of church administrators, and theologians. I did not preach a single sermon nor make one statement about Des Ford and his position relative to the sanctuary doctrine. I did not mention Ellen White nor ques- tion her inspiration or plagiarism nor make any comment about the conflict brewing within the church at that time. The only subject I preached for 18 months was the authen- tic gospel of Jesus, focusing upon its heart of justification by faith alone.

Only briefly I will mention the traumatic events which took place during those 18 months. They included:

- Long sessions of questioning and stern warnings from the conference president.
I praise God today and will not cease, for the freedom in Christ into which He eventually led us, for the unspeakable glory of His grace and the preciousness of the authentic gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Compared to the burden Adventism lays upon a person, Christ’s yoke is as light as balsam wood!

Valley of the Shadow

When I read a climax in December, 1981, the conference president said I must make a public statement of loyalty covering four specific areas or else I could never serve again in the denomination as a minister. He told us not to worship with our congregation as long as we remained in Bozeman. I was to move my family out of the state within three weeks. In the meantime I was to find work, a place to live, pack and move, and enroll our four children in new schools. He warned that I had two weeks in which to do these things! The urgency, one conference official told me, originated from the conference president’s fear that I would start an independent congregation in the shadow of the Montana Conference Office. Such a move, he no doubt felt, would be a financial drain on local Adventist membership. I would be a messenger (more than a prophet) for the Adventists, yet she was so well put together. I’m praying for an opportunity to share it with my Adventist sisters across the street. I think they’ll feel a letter is needed this time.

Statement of Loyalty

Romans 9:5 says: Christ is God over all. I have to ask, Is God over all things in my life? Am I progressing in holiness? Romans 13:14: “…make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” How do I follow this command? By putting on Christ Jesus. I cannot coast in my walk with Christ. I must actively examine myself and submit my life to God’s word. Often I am big on head things, but what about heart things? Am I spending enough time watching and paying attention to the motions of the Spirit in my heart? Am I progressing in holiness? All these years after my traumatic departure from Adventist ministry I can still say that being obedient to Jesus is worth天鹅 creek and may come as no surprise. Incidentally I did give my public statement of loyalty demanded by the conference president. On our last Sabbath in our church in Bozeman as I finished my last sermon, I told the congregation I would close with my statement of loyalty. Then I repeated the words of this hymn: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.” After the benediction I walked down the aisle center of the church where the second love of my life next to the Lord Jesus, my wife Bonnie, stood up from her seat and took the church where the second love of my life next to the Lord Jesus, my wife Bonnie, stood up from her seat and took the church where the second love of my life next to the Lord Jesus, my wife Bonnie, stood up from her seat and took my hand. Together we walked out to the front doors of the church where we wished God’s blessing to the people as they left. Praise God for the glorious freedom offered in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Kudos for Easter Proclamation!

I just finished reading the [March/April 2007 issue] and had a couple of kudos I would like to throw into the mix. The article on Adventism is not my background. Legalism and Mormonism are. Paul and Terry Mira’s story was so well put together. I’m praying for an opportunity to share it with my Adventist sisters across the street. I think they’ll feel a letter is needed. “Prophets of unconventional venues” and the ever-safe “internal experiences” I think that’s where they are right now. Richard Pfeiffer’s article really finds me up, particularly the “those life” exhortation, at the end saying, essentially, “Don’t worry that you are a filthy, wretched, lowly, unsavable sinner; or that you are Adventist, Baptist, Methodist, Mormon or ___ (fill in the blank) … choose life, and let no one shake your confidence in Christ!” Great evangelist! Finally, as I am slowly reading through Isaiah… I am amazed over and over again at how consistent God’s message is. I saw Dale Raffell’s all’s observation at the prophecy where the Scripter Lord appears to his disciples, “and beginning with Moses and ALL the prophets, he interpreted to them the things concern- ing Himself in all the scriptures.” This text reminded me of Colleen Tinker’s editorial that impacted me: “I reflected on her second life changing moment when she “learned that Jesus keeps the requirements of the new covenant with the Father for me” I had never thought about it like that before.” Tonight, I read Isaiah 26:12 “O Lord, you will ordain peace for us; You have done for all our works.”

More Easter Issue reflections

Like any good Adventist, I dutifully took a basket to the church, but I feel a letter is needed this time. I read with interest and joy the brief [editorial] by Colleen Tinker I have had a lot of experience. As I studied my Bible and the writings of Ellen White, I came to the same conclusions and saw visions that made a more perfect understanding of God’s love, mercy, and grace, but I did not have to adapt the Adventist fol- lowership to find it. It has been a wonderful all along. I read with pain in my heart your feeble attempt to discard God’s 4th commandment. The Sabbath I have changed hasn’t been abolished, and it remains the heart of the Ten Commandments. It is the only authentic Lord’s Day. As I observed pictures of ladies wearing jewelry, lipstick, etc., I began to realize what your problem was as Adventists. It is the way you view your own religious celebration. You felt restricted and you revolutionized against those peripheral restrictions. You feel so much rebel and remain, but that’s essentially another message. Someone in this same issue found fault with the issue of diet. Perhaps some ministers put undue emphasis on that subject, but it is very rare! In fact, I feel it is barely addressed at all because it is an obvious factor. For health and life. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All the recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White, you feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was. It was a tool you were a loving and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All the recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White, you feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was. It was a tool you were a loving and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All the recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White, you feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was. It was a tool you were a loving and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All the recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White, you feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was. It was a tool you were a loving and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All the recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White, you feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was. It was a tool you were a loving and defilement of it is risky business, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet. All the recent research indicates that the only safe diet (from a health standpoint) is a plant-based diet in as natural a form as possible. The diet recommended by Ellen White, you feeble attempt to restrict the understanding of Revelation 19:10 was. It was a tool you were a loving and
Ministry founders celebrate 50 Years

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 23, 2007, at a party in their home. Over 60 people attended including their two sons, Bruce and Mike and their families, and Carolyn’s four sisters. Guests ranged from former colleagues at Monterey Bay Academy to members of their Bible study group at their local church. After a lasagna lunch, Dale and Carolyn exchanged vows and tributes which we share below, and Carolyn showed a slide show she created beginning with pictures of the Valentine she gave Dale when she was in the third grade and he was in fourth.

They exchanged vows in which they committed to fulfill the last half of their verbal contracts with each other to live together for the first 100 years. They promised to continue to love each other as well as their sons, daughters-in-law and grand children—Bruce, Denise, Melissa, and Leon; Mike; Sandy, Ericka, and Kenny—for the rest of their lives with the grace and blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Carolyn’s Tribute
My Dearest Dale,
Thank you for 50 wonderful years of marriage. Never did I dream when meeting that cute boy in the fourth grade when I was in the 3rd grade that we would be here today celebrating our marriage especially since you moved away during the school year.
Your caring, thoughtfulness, patience, honesty, courage to stand for the right, commitment to seeking truth, and sense of humor all are an inspiration to me and cause me to love you more each day.
I thank God He led our family to move to the same town as your family when we were in high school and that we shared so many fun times in our teenage years.
Today as I think of our love for each other, my heart overflows with thankfulness to you and to God.
I Love You.

Dale’s Tribute
Carolyn,
Since I first met you I have been-esteem ed in my eyes. The childhood attraction I had for you when I was in fourth grade turned into love when we were in high school. Our mutual desire to serve God, my admiration of your trustworthy character, your high moral values, your compelling smile, our interest in beauty of nature and the many fun times we had together led me to want you for my life partner. Yes, we followed the counsel of our teachers when they told us we were getting too serious and did not date for many months. However, after I had a chance to evaluate a few other girls, I decided that no one else would do but you alone.
After my first year in college we got married. That was 50 years ago, but I can still smell the limburger cheese my “best man” smeared on the manfold, the door handles, the hood release, and the trunk latch of that 1950 Studebaker. We were young and broke, but we had each other, and we were incredibly happy.
Some years later, our family expanded, and Bruce and Mike enlarged the circumference of our love and the scope of our happiness. And now, being added two daughters and four grand children—what a wonderful family we have.
Carolyn, our journey over the past 50 years has taken us down many winding roads, over hills and through valleys, but we happily traveled the road together. Even when we made a few wrong turns, we can now see that God was working all things together for good.
Now, Carolyn, after 50 years of marriage you are more dearly esteemed than ever. I love you more than the spoken word can tell. I don’t know what lies ahead, but I do know that I am committed to love you, provide for you and care for you to the best of my ability, and yes, I really do love you, really do, and I always will.

The reason you should leave the Adventist church is to run towards Jesus.

Godfrey Drew  is a family physician from Simi Valley California. Born and raised in South Africa, he was a Seventh-day Adventist for 32 years. He attended Patterson Park Adventist School (1959-60), Sedavon High School (1961, 1963-64), Helderberg College (1965-67) and Walla Walla College (1970-73). He did medical research at Loma Linda University (1973-70) and has been practicing in Thousand Oaks for 17 years. He and his wife Holly attend Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California.

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the only One who can save us from this fallen, cursed, sick world. He is the only One who can save us from our desperately wicked selves and the self-deception to which we are doomed. "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete and He is the only head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

The walk with Christ is a radical thing. He is the reason we are here. He made us. He is our Creator. He is our breath and our life, and He has plans for us.

How do we learn to follow Jesus?

But how do we walk, run, eat, and breath Jesus Christ in this world that tugs all of our senses in every direction, erecting many idols of the heart causing us to worship things other than the God we love? The hymn writer has said, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Oh take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above." Living for Jesus alone requires that we learn to fear God correctly, and as we learn to fear God, we learn how to live for Jesus and to follow Him out of bondage into freedom.

What does it mean to fear God? Scripture explains by revealing God and His will. After all, the Bible is our only objective source of information about Him. The Bible reveals that fearing God involves what we know, what we believe, and what we do.

Knowing God includes more than knowing biblical facts about Him. To know God also means to experience Him—His goodness, mercy, and love showered on us in Christ Jesus. As a result of experiencing the mercy and love of Christ, we learn to express our admiration and respect in worshipful veneration of Him, knowing that His grace includes His discipline of us as well as our inheritance of His kingdom (Heb 12:28, 29).

As a child of God I know that He disciplines me. I know that if I suffer, He is disciplining me to trust Him. If I disobey the Lord Jesus, he will reprove, discipline, and "scourge" me (Heb 12:3-6). Yet this discipline is part of His grace that transforms me when I am His son. My experience of knowing God and experiencing Jesus includes realizing that He loves me and disciplines me as a true Father, and these two things are both parts of His grace to me. My knowing God and experiencing Him as my Father are part of what it means to fear God.

Believing God involves understanding the Biblical data about God through the work of His grace and of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He gives us understanding so we know and believe that the fear of God involves justice and fairness (Lev 25:17). It also means walking in His statutes and
Introduction:

A number of people have written asking questions regarding the law that is written on the heart. “Isn’t the law written on the heart the Ten Commandments? If it is, then isn’t the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment included in this law?” This is such an important topic that we can only begin to address it in this article. Our goal, as always, is to let Scripture lead us to the correct answer.

The promise of a new covenant is clearly stated in Jeremiah 31:31–34:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord. “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ‘They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more.”

The writer of Hebrews states emphatically that this promise has been fulfilled in the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. He quotes Jeremiah with a few subtle changes and adds additional information that will be vitally important in reaching a correct conclusion about the nature of the law written on our hearts.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, “Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all will know Him, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:6–13).

When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete, and what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a gold en altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant (Hebrews 9:1–4).

Reading the context of both passages gives us specific insight and also raises several questions that deserve answers.

First the insights:

• The old covenant in view is the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant, not the Abrahamic Covenant.

• The new covenant has a better ministry, is a better covenant, and is enacted on better promises.

• The new covenant is not like (is different from) the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai.

• In the new covenant God’s laws will be written in our minds and on our hearts.

• In the new covenant God will be our God and we will be God’s people.

• In the new covenant we will not teach our fellow citizen and brother saying, “Know the Lord,” for all will know Him.

• In the new covenant there will be no preferential understanding of God; all will be able to know the Lord.

• In the new covenant God will be merciful to our iniquities and remember our sins no more.

• The new covenant makes the first covenant obsolete.

• The old is terminated with the coming of the new.

• Included in the first (called old in other places in the NT) covenant were the tabernacle furniture and God’s covenant, and is enacted on better promises.

• Included in the first covenant were the tables of the covenant (the Ten Commandments).

Now for the questions:

• Who is to be included in the new covenant? Is the new covenant only for “the house of Israel” and “the house of Judah”? Is this promise also for the Gentiles who accept Christ?

• To what do “mind” and “heart” refer?

• What exactly is the “law” that will be written on the minds and hearts of the people included in the new covenant?

• Does the law written on the heart of new covenant Christians differ from the law that was written on stone? If so, in what way is it different?

• How does the law written on the heart relate to “natural...
The promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 mentions both the “house of Israel” and the “house of Judah.” However, Israel, the northern Kingdom, was taken captive and interspersed with the other nations to such an extent that it is no longer identifiable by race. Some have taught the “British Israel” theory, but it is without foundation in fact. No reputable historian supports this theory. Therefore, one could say that the “house of Israel” is now blended into what the Bible calls “the Gentile” or other nations while the “house of Judah” would refer to the Jews of the southern kingdom. Paul also states that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the promised salvation of God was not clearly made known in other generations. Therefore, we should not expect Jeremiah in his mention of the new covenant to clearly articulate the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenant. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph. 3:4-6).

Paul makes it patently clear that within the arrangement of the new covenant there is now only one body, the church, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Considering all of this, if the question of the Sabbath is to be honestly scratched on the surface of this topic—we conclude that the new covenant promise given in Jeremiah 31 and applied in Hebrews as well as the epistles of Paul is for all Christians. The “mind” or “heart” is the memory coupled with the conscience.

Few would disagree that “heart” or “mind” refers to the memory and conscience which is the moral judging component of the mind. Therefore, we will not here list the supporting biblical evidence for this conclusion. I have written two articles on this conscience that may be found at http://fcaoeunasmeministries.org/Proclamation2002_JanFeb.pdf and http://fcaoeunasmeministries.org/Proclamation2002_MarApr.pdf. However, as the conscience is a vitally important topic especially for those in transition, I will list here the summary conclusions referenced in the above mentioned articles.

We should all recognize that our own conscience database may be deficient.

We should always follow our conscience.

When we follow our conscience, wanting to do right and thinking we are doing right, but end up doing wrong, God treats us with grace and mercy (and usually gives opportunity for enlightenment).

Acting contrary to our conscience causes spiritual disaster. Refusing to study and look at the facts can be as dangerous as going against our conscience, causing spiritual disaster.

The covenant God made with Israel through him. There is also no biblical record of people observing the Sabbath until it was given to Israel. Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:2, 3 state that the Ten Commandment Covenant (with its Sabbath sign) was NOT given to the patriarchs and fathers of the Hebrew nation. This covenant only came 430 years after God had made his covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:17)—a covenant in which nothing was said about the Sabbath.

4. The Bible clearly says that this new covenant was about a.D. 49 to consider the issue of whether Gentile Christians should be circumcised and thereby undertake to keep the Law (see Ac. 15:13). The apostles here recognized the Holy Spirit’s fulfillment accomplished (Ac. 15:28, 29). Hence the conference decided that Gentile Christians need NOT be circumcised and keep the Law. Instead they were to observe only four items from the Law (three ritual and one moral) which would make it easier for Jewish believers to fellowship with them. They were not burdened with anything else from the Law (Ac. 15:28, 29). The four items did NOT include Sabbath observance. Thus did the Jerusalem Conference officially recognize the Law-free Gentile mission.

5. Sabbatarians argue that the silence of the Jerusalem Conference on the Sabbath question proves that all sides must have agreed to keep the Sabbath. Not so. When a Jewish proselyte was circumcised, it was a token that he had undertaken to “obey the whole law” (Gal. 5:3) which included the Sabbath. So the real issue of the Jerusalem conference was whether Gentile believers should be subject to “the whole law.” The conference “voted” against this idea, thereby confirming the Law-free status of Gentile believers which included freedom from observing the weekly Sabbath (see Ac. 15).

Paul never wrote to his Gentile converts urging them to observe the Sabbath for the simple reason it did not apply to them. Similarly, he is also silent regarding this matter in his letters. Here too, this silence cannot be regarded as an indication that he and his converts took the obligation to observe the Sabbath for granted because in most of his letters he was not silent concerning the Law-free status of Gentile believers. On the contrary, he states their freedom from Mosaic law very clearly throughout, thereby confirming the Jerusalem Conference’s decision regarding this matter.

Furthermore, we cannot base our faith and build our spiritual earthly institution to celebrate the whole law” (Gal. 4:15). Thus saith the Lord. 6. The Sabbath was not only the sign or seal of the Old Sinaitic Covenant; it was also a festival that commemorated the Exodus event and the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Furthermore, it also celebrated creation because of the creation of the Hebrew nation and its deliverance from Egyptian bondage when seen as a recapitulation of the original creation event. This connection can be seen in the relationship between these two events (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:14-17).

In view of these facts we pose the question, how can the Sabbath be Scriptural, given by God to Israel to commemorate the old creation and the old Exodus, be an institution to celebrate the new creation (2 Co. 5:17) and the new exodus (Col. 1:12, 13) that have taken place through the death and resurrection of Christ under the new covenant? To insist on observing the old covenant sign of the Sabbath would be tantamount to a denial of what God offers us in the New Testament Gospel. New covenant believers should come to terms with the fact that the old covenant sign, that Sabbath is NOT adequate to celebrate the new eschatological age of the Gospel and the Spirit that came with the new covenant. The old winemakers of the old covenant are not adequate to contain the new wine of the new covenant.

7. The New Testament is clear that new covenant Christians are NOT under the jurisdiction of the old covenant and its law system (of which the Sabbath was the sign) since the cross of Christ is stated to be its end (Ro. 10:4); its cancellation or taking away (Col. 2:14), and its abolition (Eph. 2:15). It is now superseded (2 Co. 3:9) by the Law of Christ (1 Co. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). Therefore, Christians are said to be dead to the old covenant and its Law system which includes the Decalogue and its Sabbath sign (Ro. 7:4) and so long as we are living as though we are still under it.

In view of the above, there is NO command in the New Testament to observe the seventh day (the first day) of the week as the Christian Sabbath—not by Jesus or his apostles. Martin Luther was clear on this point. He stated: “Throughout the New Testament we do not find a single place where we Christians are commanded to celebrate the Sabbath” (What Luther Says: An Anthology, 3:1329).

Given the context of God’s deliverance of His people from sin by Christ’s death and resurrection, He has entered a new covenant with them. In this covenant God’s people honor and obey the Lord Jesus instead of the shadow of the law which Moses mediated to Israel. The new covenant is the fulfillment and replacement of the old covenant, and the old covenant symbols and requirements no longer apply when a person has been made alive in Christ. New covenant ethics are grounded in knowing the Lord Jesus, not in the temporary law given to Israel. New covenant believers look to God’s divine intervention in the lives of His people.
“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but what is helpful for building others up… Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, slandering and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Eph. 4:29,31).

In view of these observations regarding new covenant ethics, the obvious question a Sabbatarian will ask is, “What about Sabbath-keeping?” In answering this question we need to consider the following points:

1. Our first concern is hermeneutics. The New Testament must always be the Christian’s final authority. That which is declared to us through Jesus and his apostles is God’s final word (Jn. 11:1; Heb. 1:1, 2). This fact means that what was applicable to Israel under the old covenant is not necessarily applicable to Christians under the new covenant unless clearly stated by Jesus and his apostles.

2. The covenants between God and man mentioned in the Bible have their special seals or signs. The rainbow was the sign of the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:12, 13). Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:10; Ro. 4:11). The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 31:16; 17; Ez. 20:12). The Holy Spirit is the seal of the new covenant (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). Nowhere in the New Testament is it stated (or even implied) that the Sabbath is the sign between God and His new covenant people as taught in Adventism.

3. The Sabbath was given to Israel ( Neh. 9:13, 14). Nowhere does the Old Testament state that Gentile nations should observe the Sabbath. In fact, the Bible has no record of any command to observe the Sabbath until the time of Moses and in solving Christian disagreements, we should use the way of love, not the way of knowledge.

• It takes time to reeducate the conscience.

• We should never urge a person to go against his conscience, even if it is obvious that his conscience database is incorrectly educated.

• We sin if we cause a person to go against his conscience.

The law written on the heart of an unbeliever who is “without law”

In the first chapter of Romans Paul declares that all men know something about God.

...that which is known about God is evident within them, for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Ro. 1:19-20).

The following references indicate that God works with those who are “without law,” seeking to bring a measure of truth to them and holding them accountable for whatever truth they do have. Paul shows that by not acknowledging God’s divine attributes of eternal power and divine nature as seen in the created world they are without excuse. Then, by rejecting what they did know about God, God gave them over to their depraved minds so that they would follow the passions which the Lord Jesus gave his followers while with them (see Jn. 10:18; 13:34 and repeatedly in chaps. 14 and 15). It also includes the instructions given believers by the Lord’s apostles as shown in the two examples above.

As for the details of God’s revealed will, we Christians do not consult the Decalogue or any other part of the old covenant; we consult the Lord Jesus Christ and His chosen apostles. In their exhortations these apostles instruct us how to live in order to please God. God revealed to them the gospel and also the details of their exhortations and instructions, and these should be our guide in everyday situations.

The Sabbath

In the psalms of David the law is often the focus of meditation and insight.4 Considering these verses—and many others too numerous to list—we conclude that the law written on the heart but not the letter of the law that is written on the heart but rather it is the law of the Spirit of Christ working in love that guides us...

So, to find out what God’s will is under the new covenant, Christians do not consult the Decalogue of the old covenant because that covenant in its totality was abolished by being nailed to the cross (Eph. 2:14, 15). Instead, they consult the Lord’s chosen apostles because God has revealed to them, not only the Gospel of salvation but also His will for those who become His people under the new covenant. Thus could Paul remind the Thessalonian believers: “…we [the Lord’s chosen apostles] instructed you how to live in order to please God” (1 Th. 4:1).

This not only applied to Christians in the first century, but it applies to us as well in the here and now.

This approach to new covenant ethics and morality is important because it sets Christians free from the old covenant as a basis and reference point for ethics, morality, and God’s will as a whole. God’s revelation of the Law of Christ through Jesus’ finished work and through the apostles’ teaching shows that the Bible has no record of any command to observe the Sabbath. In fact, the Bible has no record of any command to observe the Sabbath until the time of Moses and death on the cross and of the covenant He subsequently enters with those who have been thus redeemed. Obedience to God’s will is never independent of the context of our deliverance from sin and of God’s bringing us into covenant relationship with Himself.

We see this context clearly in the writings of Paul. He always reminds his readers of the Gospel first and then only exhorts them to holy living, as demonstrated in the two examples above. We see the same pattern in his letter to the Christians in Rome where he says: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy (the Gospel of which he wrote in this letter), to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God…” (Ro. 12:1). He follows with instructions in God’s will how they are to behave towards fellow Christians, non-believers, the government, the weak and the strong, and so on.

The basis of new covenant ethics is no longer the Law of Moses but the Law of Christ. This law consists of the instructions which the Lord Jesus gave his followers while with them (see Jn. 10:18; 13:34 and repeatedly in chaps. 14 and 15). It also includes the instructions given believers by the Lord’s apostles as shown in the two examples above.

In view of the conclusion above, what is the context in which the Bible presents this matter of ethics? Without exception it always poses the question as to how we should live in obedience to God. Revelation will in the context of the divine-human relationship based on His redemptive act in Christ’s

The old covenant foreshadowed the new covenant and found its fulfillment in Jesus

In the statements that deal with the law written on the heart, it is emphasized over and over again that it is not of the letter of the law that is written on the heart but rather it is the law of the Spirit of Christ working in love that guides us...

In the psalms of David the law is often the focus of meditation and insight. Considering these verses—and many others too numerous to list—we conclude that the law written on the heart...
Paul makes it very clear that for the one who has sin in his life (and that is all of us) the letter of the law (old covenant law) works for death.

What is the Law written on the heart of new covenant Christians?

We must be careful to answer this question in the light of the insights given us by the Lord as recorded by Jeremiah and interpreted by the writers of the New Testament. The new covenant is not a continuation or reworking of the old. While there are similarities, there are also marked differences. The old became aged and “near to vanishing away.”

James says that the new covenant discipline which has greater moral depth, wider application, and deals with the attitudes of the heart.

Jesus does the same thing with the commandment against murder. You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not commit murder,” and whoever commits murder shall die. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says, “You fool,” shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Murder involves activity. Again Jesus moves away from the letter of the law to the moral principle behind the law which again has greater moral depth and much wider application. Anger is not an activity; it is an attitude of the heart. Jesus goes on to show that the principle behind this commandment even forbids condemnation speaking and thinking.

Like Paul, Jesus shows that the law condemns. He ends his discussion of law with these words:

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48).

If we take the teachings of Jesus seriously we must conclude that it is utterly impossible to keep the law when the full reach of the law is made with our hearts.

When asked, “What is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus did not even go to the Ten Commandments but to other laws within the Torah.

And his answer was “You shall love the Lord your God with all your HEART, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Mt. 22:37-40).

Again, who really loves the Lord with all the heart? Who truly loves the neighbor as himself/herself? Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that if one truly loves, he will be in harmony with the whole Law and Prophets. In other words, the new covenant law that is written on the heart is the law of love. Paul agrees with and expands on the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not covet.” James says the same.

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

James says the same. If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as your self,” you are doing well (James 2:8).

Here we should note well that in every instance where love is said to be the fulfillment of the law, it refers to the “whole law,” but never is the Sabbath mentioned. The words of Jesus as represented in the four Gospels, the theology of Paul, and the writings of John and James are all in agreement that love is the fulfillment of the whole principle of life in the new covenant; it is the law that is written on the heart. In the gospel of John, Jesus calls love “a new commandment” and says that love is the sign by which all men will know that they are Christ’s disciples.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn. 13:34-35).

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (Jn. 15:12).

This I command you, that you love one another (Jn. 15:17).

For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (1 Jn. 3:11).

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 Jn. 4:7).

Christians are also to give of their means to the poor because they “know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for (their) sakes he became poor, so that (they) through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). Christians “who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak… For even Christ did not please himself” (Ro. 15:3). By assuming one another’s burdens as Christ assumed ours on the cross, we Christians “fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:1-2).

So, God’s supreme act of love towards us as manifested in Christ’s life and death becomes the basis of all Christian obedience to the will of God under the new covenant. Christ’s sacrifice not only makes us willing to consecrate to Him and our fellow man all that we have and are, it also shows us how, as pointed out above. We saw that under the old covenant Israel’s ethical life was inspired and defined by God’s act of delivering them from Egyptian bondage and by the covenant He entered into with them (Ex. 20:2). But under the new covenant, Christian ethics (doing God’s will) is inspired and defined by Christ’s life, death and resurrection and by the covenant God has entered with those delivered from sin by His grace based on the finished work of Christ.

The First

The first example is Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians. In this letter he firstly reminds them of the Gospel and states, “…we [the apostles] speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel… As apostles of Christ… we were delighted to share with you… the gospel of God” (1 Th. 2:4, 6b, 8). In this Gospel Paul states the grace of God by which they were delivered from Satan’s kingdom of darkness. This deliverance was their new covenant Exodus. Secondly, in view of God’s redeeming grace, Paul reminds them concerning the will of God and says: “…we [the Lord’s apostles—not Moses] instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we [the Lord’s apostles] ask you and urge you in (your faith union) with the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we [the Lord’s apostles—not Moses] gave you [in this regard] by the authority of the Lord Jesus: It is God’s will that you…should avoid sexual immorality…For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Th. 4:1-2).

Here then is the reason why Christians do not commit adultery—not because of the 7th commandment in the Decalogue, but because they are told not to do so by the Lord’s chosen apostle who also states—by the authority of Christ—that this is the will of God under the new covenant. (Because the apostle repeats certain commands found in the Decalogue is NOT proof that it is still in force under the new covenant).

Paul also adds other details NOT found in the Decalogue like, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, just as we [the Lord’s apostles—not Moses] told you” (1 Th. 4:11). Also, “Live in peace with each other… work, making the most of your time” (Eph. 5:15). If we take the teachings of Jesus seriously we must conclude that it is utterly impossible to keep the new covenant law when the whole reach of the law is made with our hearts.

The Second

The second example of God’s revelation of His will to new covenant believers is the Second Letter to the Corinthians. Paul first reminds them of the Gospel concerning Christ and what God had accomplished through Him for Jews and Gentiles alike (Eph. 1-3). Then, in view of the Gospel, he states: “As a prisoner of the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” But what does such a life consist of? Paul enumerates: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love… each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor… Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry… He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work… that he may have something to share with those in need.

Morality in the new covenant is governed by God Himself rather than by the limited expression of a written law.
1. Its Context
The context in which God’s will (ethics) is presented in the Bible is not a religion with its moral code—a list of do’s and don’ts—but a relationship established by God with His citizens. In principle, this relationship is based on two things: 1) God’s redemption of his people and 2) the subsequent covenant he enters into with them. This covenant basically consists of two parts: a) God’s goodwill promise to his people—that which He requires of them, before God could enter into a covenantal relationship with His people, however, He had to deliver them from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. It is clear from reading Moses and the Prophets that whenever they instruct God’s people on how to live according to God’s revealed will they do so in terms of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent covenantal relationship which God entered into with them. So, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, the ethics God prescribed to Israel are always embedded in both the redemption story of the Exodus and of Israel’s covenantal relationship with God. God’s expectations for Israel are never independent of those two things.

Under the new covenant
God and His ancient people Israel were joined in a pact known as the old covenant. This covenant also consisted of two basic parts: 1) God’s goodwill promises to them—that which He would do for them and 2) God’s revealed will—that which He required of them. Before God could enter into a covenantal relationship with His people, however, He had to deliver them from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. It is clear from reading Moses and the Prophets that whenever they instructed God’s people on how to live according to God’s revealed will they do so in terms of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent covenantal relationship which God entered into with them. So, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, the ethics God prescribed to Israel are always embedded in both the redemption story of the Exodus and of Israel’s covenantal relationship with God. God’s expectations for Israel are never independent of those two things.

Under the new covenant
In principle, the new covenant is structured the same way. Before God can bring man into a new covenantal relationship with Himself, He has to deliver him from Satan’s kingdom of darkness (the new exodus) and bring him over into His kingdom of light (Col. 1:13, 14). This deliverance is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. The believer is then joined to His Creator in a pact referred to as the new covenant. This covenant also consists of two parts: a) First is God’s promise of good-will to His people—that which He will do for them. In this God is committed to the continual welfare of their daily needs—whether physical (Mt. 6:25-33) or spiritual (Phil. 4:19). b) Second is God’s will for His people. This will is revealed to His people by saving them from sin and supplying all their needs and thus gives the believer eternal security.

b) Second part is God’s will for His people—that which He requires of them. He requires that which He entrusts to them to keep (Heb. 7:21, Mt. 5:35; 5:21-22, 7:1; 6:3; 7:1, 5:15; 7:17; Ro. 12:10; Col. 1:7). In this God is committed to be under His authority at all times and to do His will without question (Mt. 5:16; Lk. 12:32). God’s people manifest their love for Him this way because the most certain proof of their trust and love is always expressed in obedience to God’s revealed will (Jn. 14:15; Jn. 14:24). Their obedience will bring glory to God (Mt. 5:16). In this article we are concerned with this second part of the covenant—God’s revealed will.

2. Its Basis
Paul states the basis of new covenant ethics in the following statement: “To those under the old covenant became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law...). To those not having the law the becoming through Moses, but being not exempted from doing God’s will he now lives under “the law of Christ.” In other words, under the old covenant, God made His will known to Israel through Moses, whereas under the new covenant, God makes His will known to Christians through Christ. The first revelation is generally known as “the law of Moses” (Ezr. 7:6; Lk. 24:44; A.D.: 13:39, 1:95 or just “Moses” (Mt. 7:10; 12:2). And the second is “Christ’s law” (1 Co. 9:21) or “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Under the old covenant the 613 commandments of the Torah (or the Law of Moses), which included the Decalogue, constituted God’s will for Israel. Those commands and instructions applied exclusively to Israel with whom that covenant was made (Ex. 34:27, 28; Dt. 1:4). That covenant, as administered by Moses, governed the life of the Jewish community until the time when it would be superseded by the more glorious ministration of the Spirit under the new covenant (2 Co. 3:7-11).

Now, under the new covenant, it is Jesus (not Moses) who is the Instructor of God’s people. He teaches them directly and through his chosen apostles what constitutes the will of God under the new covenant. So, Christian ethics has Christ (not Moses) at its center. Do we find that in light of Christ’s self-denying life and self-sacrificing death we receive a much deeper insight and understanding of what it means to do God’s revealed will under the new covenant. Here God gives us a new definition of love (Jn. 6:27), of humility (Phil. 2:1-3), of dedication to God (Ro. 12:1-2), and of service (Ro. 15:1-4).

Consider how Jesus redlines the divine command to love. He says, “a new commandment I give you: Love one another. As you have loved me, so must you love one another” (Jn. 13:34). We know that the command to love already existed under the old covenant (Lev. 19:18). But the command to love one another as Christ loved us could only apply in the light of his self- denying life and self-sacrificing death upon the cross. The love of Christ as revealed in his life and death for mankind was henceforth to be the basis for Christian living. Jesus is self-sacrificing love for us. The basis for all the exhortations Christ’s apostles gave us. For example, husbands are to love their wives—but how? Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). Wives are to submit to their husbands—but how? “...as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Christians are to forgive one another—but how? “...just as Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). Christians are to serve one another—but how? In the same way that Christ “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:18). In our discovery of the law written on the heart of the new covenant Christian we must also take into consideration a few points that confirm the law is not the focus of the new covenant Christian. Following are only samplings:
For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continuely works of light (Col. 1:13, 14). This deliverance is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. It is NOT the letter of old covenant law or even the so called “spirit of the law” (an unbiblical term) that is to be written down on our hearts. Rather, it is the un写定 of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that fully meets “the requirement of the law”—love, which is the law’s fulfillment.

For what the Law could not do weak as it was through the flesh, God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Ro. 8:3-5).

We are now to focus on what God has done for us. It is the glory of the cross, the glory of the resurrection, it is the
It is not the so-called "spirit of the law" that is written on our hearts and is the focus of our attention, but now it is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that fully meets "the requirement of the law." The glory of forgiveness of all sin, it is the assurance that we are now qualified to share in the inheritance of righteousness, it is the glory of now being sons and daughters of God, it is the glory of now being redeemed; it is the glory of now being qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Yes, it is the assurance that we are now transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:15-18).

Realizing who we are in Christ, experiencing the reality of the law of the Spirit in life in Christ Jesus written on our hearts in love brings forth true freedom, liberty and worship. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His abundance, according to the measure of His free gift, with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, 4. till such time as we come to possess all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).

Thus far we can conclude the following: 1. The promise of the new covenant with its associated blessings of the law written on the heart applies to all Christians.

2. Gentiles, who do not have the written law, nevertheless have some knowledge of God through natural law and often know right from wrong.

3. Members of the old covenant community had the letter of the written law, some of which may have been moved to the heart through meditation and memorization. However, the thrust of both Jeremiah and Hebrews is on the contrast between the letter of old covenant law and that written on the heart by the Spirit in the new covenant Christian.

4. The law written on the heart is the law of love, and it is the fulfillment of the whole law and is said to be "a new commandment." "Now our focus is not on the external letter of old covenant law and ritual. Rather it is the indwelling "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that fully meets "the requirement of the law"—love, which is the law's fulfillment. This moves the focus of our attention from "here is a list of things we must do" to "here is a list of things Christ has done for us."

5. Our Elder Brother presents us before the Father not in our own righteousness, but we are found "in Him, not having a righteousness of our own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Phil. 3:8)."

Endnotes
2. Leqell, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 278, 279.
3. Geisler, Norman L, and Turek, Frank, I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist, p. 171.
4. Psalm 119 is a good example among many.
5. Heb. 8:13, 2 Cor. 3:4-10 Col. 2:12-20.
6. The book of Hebrews lists many contrasts showing that the new covenant is "better" than the old in every respect. See Ratsaff, Sabbath in Christ, p. 279-291 for many examples.
7. Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant is a prophecy of the ultimate consummation of the kingdom of God, and in Paul and Hebrews the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant has to do not with relative distinctions between the two dispensations of God's covenant of grace succeeding one another in time but with the radical antithesis of the two subjective situations: the formalism, legalism, unbelief and death of ancient Israel on the one hand and the genuine experience of salvation by all believers on the other." R.S. Raabum, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 278, 279.
11. Sometimes, but not always, the eternal moral principle behind the letter of the law may encompass what the letter of the law says. In this case, and in the illustration of murder, the letter of the law is congruous with the eternal moral principle behind the command. 12. When He said, "a new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear (Heb. 8:13).
13. "The spirit of the law" is not a Biblical term and should not be confused with the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus.

Introduction
In a secular sense ethics can be defined as the science of conduct. It is a systematic attempt to consider the purposeful actions of mankind so as to determine their rightness or wrongness, their tendency to good or evil. Christian ethics can be defined as the Christian's conduct in terms of God's revealed will in a covenantal relationship with Him. It answers the question, "What does God require us to do, and what attitudes does He require us to have?"

One of the most frequent questions every sincere Christian has at some time asked is: "What is God's will for my life... What does God expect of me... How should I live in order to please God?" The earnest desire of every Christian is not only to be counted right (justification) but also to do right (sanctification). In this they are constantly faced with ethical decisions. Is it right to do this? Is it wrong to do that?

Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to "find out what pleases the Lord" (Eph. 5:10). But how can we find out what is pleasing to God? He also says: "Be very careful... Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" (Eph. 5:15). But how can we know what the Lord's will is? Isaiah states: "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isa. 30:21). But how do we hear this voice? God says through the Psalmist:"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will guide you with my eye" (Ps. 32:8). But how does God do this? What does the Bible present as the Christian's guide to morality under the new covenant?

When we talk about Christian ethics we are talking about God’s revealed will for new covenant believers—those moral requirements God expects of Christians (Ro. 12:1, 2; Col. 1:9; 3:20; Eph. 5:5, 17; 6:6; Heb. 10: 30; 13: 20, 21). Just as God required His people under the old covenant to live in a certain way, He requires His people under the new covenant to live in a certain way. Before we consider the details that constitute God’s will for Christians under the new covenant, however, we need to consider the context and basis of God’s will as presented in the Scriptures. Otherwise the exhortations given us in the New Testament could become a mere list of moral do’s and don’ts similar to those in other world religions. The Bible, however, never presents God’s will for His people—under the old covenant or the New—as a mere list of moral do’s and don’ts.

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What are new covenant ethics? Are they in the Ten Commandments?
glory of forgiveness of all sin, it is the glory of imputed righteousness, it is the glory of now being sons and daugh-
ters of God, it is the glory of now being redeemed; it is the
glory of now being qualified to share in the inheritance of
the saints in Light. Yes, it is the assurance that we are now
saved, not by anything we do but only and always by and in
Christ Jesus alone.

But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over
their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil
is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the
Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled
face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are
being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,
just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:15-18).

Realizing who we are in Christ, experiencing the reality of
the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus written on our
hearts in love brings forth true freedom, liberty and wor-
ship.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from
whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,
that He would grant you, according to the riches of His
grace, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in
the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts
through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in
love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is
the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know
the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may
be filled up to all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).

Thus far we can conclude the following:
• The promise of the new covenant with its associated
  blessings of the law written on the heart applies to all
  Christians.

  • Gentiles, who do not have the written law, nevertheless
    have some knowledge of God through natural law and
    often know right from wrong.
  • Members of the old covenant community had the
    letter of the written law, some of which may have been
    moved to the heart through meditation and memorization.

Endnotes

2. Lenski, Hebrews, p. 305.


4. Psalm 119 is a good example among many.

5. Heb. 8:13; 2 Cor. 3:4-18; Gal. 4:21-31.

6. The book of Hebrews lists many contrasts showing that the new
covenant is “better” than the old in every respect. See Ratzlaff, Sabbath
in Christ, p. 279-291 for many examples.

7. Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant is a prophecy of the ultimate
consummation of the kingdom of God, and in Paul and Hebrews the
contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant has to do not
with relative distinctions between the two dispensations of God’s
covenant of grace succeeding one another in time but with the radical
antithesis of the two subjective situations: the formalism, legalism,
unbelief and death of ancient Israel on the one hand and the genuine
experience of salvation by all believers on the other.” R.S. Rayburn,
Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 278, 279.


9. Heb. 8:13, Updated New American Standard Bible


11. Sometimes, but not always, the eternal moral principle behind the letter
of the law may encompass what the letter of the law says. In this case, and
in the illustration of murder, the letter of the law is congruous with
moral principle behind the law.

12. When He said, “a new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But
whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear
(Heb. 8:13).

13. “The spirit of the law” is not a Biblical term and should not be confused
with the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus.
1. Its Context

The context in which God’s will (ethics) is presented in the Bible is not a religion with its moral code—a list of do’s and don’ts—but a relationship established by God with the citizens of His kingdom. This relationship is based on two things: 1) God’s redemption of his people and 2) the subsequent covenant He enters into with them. This covenant basically consists of two parts: a) God’s goodwill promise to his people—that which He would do for them and b) God’s will for them—that which He wants them to do.

Under the old covenant

God and His ancient people Israel were joined in a pact known as the old covenant. This covenant also consisted of two basic parts: 1) God’s goodwill promises to them—that which He would do for them and 2) God’s revealed will—that which He required of them. Before God could enter into a covenantal relationship with His people, however, He had to deliver them from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. It is clear from reading Moses and the Prophets that whenever they instructed God’s people on how to live according to God’s revealed will they do so in terms of the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent covenantal relationship which God entered into with them. So, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, the ethics God prescribed to Israel are always embedded in both the redemptive story of the Exodus and of Israel’s covenantal relationship with God’s expectations for Israel are never independent of those two things.

Under the new covenant

In principle, the new covenant is structured the same way. Before God can bring man into a new covenantal relationship with Himself, He has to deliver him from Satan’s kingdom of darkness (the new exodus) and bring him over into His kingdom of light (Col. 1:13, 14). This deliverance is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. The believer is then joined to His Creator in a pact referred to as the new covenant. This covenant also consists of two parts: a) First is God’s promise of good-will to His people—that which He will do for them. In this God is committed to the continual welfare of their daily needs—whether physical (Mt. 6:25-33) or spiritual (Mt. 11:25-30). God manifests His love for His people by saving them from sin and supplying all their needs and thus gives the believer eternal security. b) The second part is God’s will for His people—that which He expects them to do. This is based on the self-sacrificing death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection from the dead and on the things of the Spirit (Ro. 6:13-19). For those who are in Christ the letter is dead, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses. For because of the glory of his face, as it was, how would the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abundant in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that remains is in glory. Therefore having such a hope, we are not made bold in our speech, and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away (2 Co. 3:6-13).

2. Its Basis

Paul states the basis of new covenant ethics in the following statement: “For those under the law became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law)…To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law)” (1 Co. 9:20-21). In this passage Paul states that he no longer lives according to God’s law (his revealed will) as given to ancient Israel through Moses. But being not exempted from doing God’s will he now lives under “the law of Christ.” In other words, under the old covenant, God made His will known to Israel through Moses, whereas under the new covenant, God makes His will known to Christians through Christ. The first revelation is generally known as “the law of Moses” (Ex. 7:6; Lk. 24:44; Acts 13:39; 1 Co. 9:9) or just “Moses” (Mt. 7:10), and the second as “Christ’s law” (1 Co. 9:21) or “the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Under the old covenant the 613 commandments of the Torah (or the Law of Moses), which included the Decalogue, constituted God’s will for Israel. Those commands and instructions applied exclusively to Israel with whom that covenant was made (Ex. 34:27, 28; Deut. 14). That covenant, as administered under Moses, governed the life of the Jewish community until the time when it would be superseded by the more glorious ministration of the Spirit under the new covenant (2 Co. 3:7-11).

Now, under the new covenant, it is Jesus (not Moses) who is the Instructor of God’s people. He teaches them personally and through his chosen apostles what constitutes the will of God under the new covenant. So, Christian ethics has Christ (not Moses) at its center. Thus do we find that in the light of Christ’s self-denying life and self-sacrifice the cross we receive a much deeper insight and understanding of what it means to do God’s revealed will under the new covenant. Here God gives us a new definition of love (1 Jn. 4:7-21), of humility (Phil. 2:1-11), of dedication to God (Ro. 12:1-2), and of service (Ro. 15:1-4).

Consider how Jesus redefines the divine command to love. He says, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (Jn. 13:34). We know that the command to love already existed under the old covenant (Lev. 19:18). But the command to love one another as Christ loved us could only apply in the light of his self-denying life and self-sacrificing death upon the cross. The love of Christ as revealed in his life and death for mankind was henceforth to be the basis for Christian living. Jesus’ self-sacrificing love was a new basis for all the exhortations Christ’s apostles gave us. For example, husbands are to love their wives—but how? Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). Wives are to submit to their husbands—but how? “...as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Christians are to forgive one another—but how? “...just as in Christ God forgave you” (Eph. 4:32). Christians are to serve one another—but how? In the same way that Christ made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant” (Philp. 2:7).

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10). In our discovery of the law written on the heart of the new covenant Christian we must also take into consideration the ethical statements that confirm the law is not the focus of the new covenant Christian. Following are only some:

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’ (Gal. 3:10). In other words, under the old covenant, God’s will for Israel was based on “the law of Moses” (Ex. 34:27, 28; Deut. 14). Under the new covenant Jesus is saying that this is no longer the case. The reason is simple: God has given us a new definition of love (1 Jn. 4:7-21), of humility (Phil. 2:1-11), of dedication to God (Ro. 12:1-2), and of service (Ro. 15:1-4). In the statements that deal with the law written on the heart, it is emphasized over and over again that it is not the letter of the law that is written on the heart, but rather it is the law of the Spirit of Christ in working love that guides us in our application of the moral principle behind the letter of the law.

...who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, …so that the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses, because of the glory of his face, as it was, how would the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that remains is in glory. Therefore having such a hope, we are not made bold in our speech, and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away (2 Co. 3:6-13).

Paul makes it very clear that for the one who has sin in his life, the law (and that is all of us) the letter of the law (old covenant law) works for death. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Ro. 7:5-6).

Now, in Christ we are released from the law in that the law can only condemn to death once. Once the law has carried out its execution, it no longer has jurisdiction over us! If we have been baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, Christ not only died for us, but we died in Him; thus we are released from the law and sin, and we should from that point on consider ourselves to be dead to sin. We should never see ourselves as sinners again! God sees us as righteous as His righteous son, and we should see ourselves accordingly! Wow! Or do you not know that all who are baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death (Ro. 6:3)?

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Ro. 6:10-11).

But, note the next verse: Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts (Ro. 6:12).

How do we do this? Not by focusing on law or as some would say, on the “spirit of the law”! Why? Because the writer of Hebrews makes it very clear that the focus of the new covenant Christian is not the focus of the old covenant Christian. Following are some:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (Ro. 8:2).

It is NOT the letter of old covenant law or even the so called, “spirit of the law” (an unbiblical term) that is to be written on our hearts. Rather, the indwellling Spirit of God, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” that fully meets “the require-ment of the law”—love, which is the law’s fulfillment.

For what the law could not do weak as it was through the flesh, God did sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Ro. 8:3-5).

We are now to focus on what God has done for us. It is the glory of the cross, the glory of the resurrection, it is the
What is the Law written on the heart of new covenant Christians?

We must be careful to answer this question in the light of the insights given us by the Lord as recorded by Jeremiah and interpreted by the writers of the New Testament. The new covenant is not a continuation or reworking of the old. While there are similarities, there are also marked differences. The Old Testament becomes and remains the heart's law. The new covenant is not addition. It is not written on physical tablets, it is not a physical code. Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that the new covenant is law written on the heart. This law is the law written on the hearts of the new covenant people by the command of the new covenant. Jesus says the same. He quotes one of the Ten Commandments and reworking the old.1 While there are similarities, there are also marked differences. The Old Testament becomes and remains the heart's law. The new covenant is not addition. It is not written on physical tablets, it is not a physical code. Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that the new covenant is law written on the heart. This law is the law written on the hearts of the new covenant people by the command of the new covenant. Jesus says the same. He quotes one of the Ten Commandments and reworking the old.1

Here Jesus quotes one of the Ten Commandments but moves from the letter of the law1 to the eternal moral principle behind the letter of the law and then applies that principle which has greater moral depth, wider application, and deals with the attitudes of the heart. Jesus does the same thing with the commandment against murder.

James says the same. If however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Ro. 13:10).

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement “You shall love your neighbor as yourself!” (Gal. 5:14).

Morality in the new covenant is governed by God Himself rather than by the limited expression of a written law.

The First

The first example is Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. In this letter he first reminds them of the Gospel and states, “...we [the apostles] speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel...as apostles of Christ...we were delighted to share with you...the gospel of God” (1 Th. 2:4, 6b, 8).

In this Gospel Paul claims the grace of God by which they were delivered from Satan's kingdom of darkness. This deliverance was their new covenant Exodus. Secondly, and in view of God's redeeming grace, Paul reminds them concerning the will of God and says: “...we [the Lord's apostles—not Moses] instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now [we the Lord's apostles], ask you and urge you in [your faith union] with the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we [the Lord's apostles—not Moses] gave you [in this regard] by the authority of the Lord Jesus: It is God's will that you...should avoid sexual immorality...For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” (1 Th. 4:1-7).

Here is the reason why Christians do not commit adultery—not because of the 7th commandment in the Decalogue, but because they are told not to do so by the Lord's chosen apostle who also states—by the authority of Christ—that this is the will of God under the new covenant. (Because the apostle repeats certain commands found in the Decalogue is NOT proof that it is still in force under the new covenant).

The Second

The second example of God's revelation of His will to new covenant believers is James's letter to the Jewish believers. He first reminds them of the Gospel concerning Christ and what God had accomplished through Him for Jews and Gentiles alike (Eph. 1:3). Then, in view of the Gospel, he states: “As a prisoner of the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” But what does such a life consist of? Paul enumerates: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love; each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to each other. Encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances...” (1 Th. 5:13b-18).

There too Paul gives the reason for all these instructions: “...for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus under the new covenant!” (1 Th. 5:18).

Paul makes it very clear that for the one who has sin in his life (and that is all of us) the letter of the law (old covenant law) works for death. Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48). If we take the teachings of Jesus seriously we must conclude that it is utterly impossible to keep the law when the full reach of the law is written in God's heart. When asked, “What is the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus did not even go to the Ten Commandments but to other laws within the Torah. And his answer was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Mt. 22:37-40).

Again, who really loves the Lord with all the heart? Who truly loves the neighbor as himself/herself? Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that if one truly loves, he will be in harmony with the whole Law and Prophets. In other words, the new covenant law that is written on the heart is the law of love. Paul agrees with and expands on the teachings of the Lord's apostles.
Obedience to God's revealed will in the context of the divine-vocation it always poses the question as to how we should live in which the Bible presents this matter of ethics? Without exception, instructions concerning God's will in regards to the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, as well as spiritual warfare (see Eph. 5:22-6:18).

To find out what God's will is under the new covenant, Christians do not consult the Decalogue or any other part of the old covenant; we consult the Lord Jesus Christ and His chosen apostles. In their exhortations these apostles instruct us how to live in order to please God. God revealed to them the gospel and also the details of their exhortations and instructions, and these should be our guide in everyday situations.

The Sabbath
In view of these observations regarding new covenant ethics, the obvious question a libertarian will ask is, “What about Sabbath-keeping?” In answering this question we need to consider the following points:

1. Our first concern is hermeneutics. The New Testament must always be the Christian's final authority. That which is declared to us through Jesus and his apostles is God's final word (Jn. 1:1; Heb. 1:2). This fact means that what was applicable to Israel under the old covenant is not necessarily applicable to Christians under the new covenant unless clearly stated in the New Testament.

The Old Testament foreshadowed the new covenant and found its fulfillment in Jesus.

So, to find out what God's will is under the new covenant, Christians do not consult the Decalogue or any other part of the old covenant; we consult the Lord Jesus Christ and His chosen apostles. In their exhortations these apostles instruct us how to live in order to please God. God revealed to them the gospel and also the details of their exhortations and instructions, and these should be our guide in everyday situations.

Conclusion
In view of the conclusion above, what is the context in which the Bible presents this matter of ethics? Without exception, it always poses the question as to how we should live in order to please God. Revealed will in the context of the divine-human relationship based on His redemptive act in Christ's death on the cross and of the covenant He subsequently enters with those who have been thus redeemed. Obedience to God's will is never independent of the context of our deliverance from sin and of God's bringing us into covenant relationship with Himself.

We see this context clearly in the writings of Paul. He always reminds his readers of the framework in his letter to the Christians in Rome where he says: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy [the Gospel of which he wrote in this letter], to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God…” (Ro. 12:1). He follows with instructions in God's will how they are to behave toward fellow Christians, non-believers, the government, the weak and the strong, and so on.

The basis of new covenant ethics is no longer the Law of Moses but the Law of Christ. This law consists of the instructions which the Lord Jesus gave his followers while with them (see Jn. 10:18; 13:34 and repeatedly in chaps. 14 and 15). It also includes the instructions given believers by the Lord's apostles as shown in the two examples above.

As for the details of God's revealed will, we Christians do not consult the Decalogue or any other part of the old covenant; we consult the Lord Jesus Christ and His chosen apostles. In their exhortations these apostles instruct us how to live in order to please God. God revealed to them the gospel and also the details of their exhortations and instructions, and these should be our guide in everyday situations.

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In the statements that deal with the law written on the heart, it is emphasized over and over again that it is not of the letter of the law that is written on the heart but rather it is the law of the Spirit of Christ working in love that guides us...

Thus, he said to them, “Take to your heart all the words with which I have warned you. And they shall conform your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law (Dt. 32:46).

With all my heart I have sought You, Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You (Ps. 119:10-11).

The law of His God is in his heart; His steps do not slip (Ps. 37:31).

In the psalms of David the law is often the focus of meditation and instruction.” Considering these verses—and many others too numerous to list—we conclude that the law in the heart of old covenant believers included natural law, a limited understanding of the ritual of sacrifice, and then at Sinai, the instruction included in the Ten Commandments.

However, while there may have been “law” in the hearts of old covenant believers, the new birth experience and the law of the Spirit of Christ being written on the heart is specifically said to be that which makes the new covenant “not like” the old and is the main point of contrast.

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Was the Law written on the hearts of old covenant believers?
There are a number of places where the Old Testament mentions the law and heart together. For example:

• “Take to your heart all the words with which I have warned you.” (Deut. 32:46)

• “I delight to do your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.” (Ps. 40:8)

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“not like” the old and is the main point of contrast

However, while there may have been “law” in the hearts of old covenant believers, the new birth experience and the new covenant promise applies to all Christians. The new covenant promise given in Jeremiah 31 and applied in the New Testament to observe the seventh day (or the first day) of the week where we Christians are commanded to celebrate the Sabbath institution, given by God to Israel to commemorate the creation of the Hebrew nation and its deliverance from Egypt. The “mind” or “heart” is the memory coupled with the conscience.

The promised new covenant of Jeremiah 31 mentions both the “house of Israel” and “the house of Judah.” However, Israel, the northern Kingdom, was taken captive and interspersed with the other nations to such an extent that it is no longer identifiable by race. Some have taught the “British Israel” theory, but it is without foundation in fact. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as recipients of the new covenant (Ro. 9:8).

Note well that Paul never grounds the inclusion of the Gentiles into the new covenant promise by their obedience to any of the laws of Sinai. Therefore, we should not expect promised salvation of God was not clearly made known in the Old Testament Gospel and the Spirit that came with the new covenant. The new covenant believers should come to the Jerusalem Conference officially recognize the Law-free Gentile mission.

The promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 mentions both the “house of Israel” and “the house of Judah.” However, Israel, the northern Kingdom, was taken captive and interspersed with the other nations to such an extent that it is no longer identifiable by race. Some have taught the “British Israel” theory, but it is without foundation in fact. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as recipients of the new covenant (Ro. 9:8). Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are saved. Paul never wrote to his Gentile converts urging them to “teach a brother to “know the Lord”?

By referring to this, when you read you can understand the new covenant is the same new covenant that Jesus taught a brother to “know the Lord”?

...
Why should I leave the Adventist church? A friend asks. “I love the Sabbath. I love our Sabbath traditions. The Sabbath has saved my sanity in a stressful world.” Let me say immediately that one would not leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to change one’s day of worship. As Adventists, we usually did not understand that Sabbath is not about a day; it’s about a Person. That Person is Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior; the One who is Lord of our lives and worthy to be worshipped on any day of the week, but especially by those who love His appearing. There is a great danger in complacency. The wise proverbian has said, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Pr 14:12). Even though one is a Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health reforming Adventist, he may be on the road to destruction. Remember, the people who killed Jesus were that kind of observant Jews, if remember hearing this comparison between the Pharisees and Adventists from Dr. Graham Maxwell in his Sabbath School classes at Loma Linda University Church in 1974.) Yet Jesus called those Pharisees hypocrites, evil workers, and a wicked generation. They were ones who would die in their sins and be consigned to everlasting punishment in the flames of hell.

If leaving Adventism should not be about changing one’s worship practices, but if there is danger of complacency slipping into unbelief if one stays, for what reason should one leave? The best and most profound reason to leave Adventism is Jesus Christ. The reason any of us should leave the Adventist church is to run towards Jesus. Everything inside Adventism confounds and confuses our walk with Christ. This statement is not merely an argument; it is a fact. It was the task of the apostle Paul to the churches at Galatia, Philippippi, Colosse, Ephesus, and everywhere in between to lead believers to Jesus and away from old covenant Judaistic things. Like it or not, the Sabbath and food restrictions belonged to the old covenant and were coming to an end.

In the new covenant we have nothing but Jesus Christ. “Jesus” was the cry of the Reformation, sola Christus. We need to run towards Jesus. We need to run the race without hindrances—drop the baggage; run free; run fast. It is the race for your life—not just for here and now but forever. The inspired writer of Hebrews 12:1-2 says, “…lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We get the same thoughts from the book of Colossians—run toward Jesus Christ. He is our only Savior.

Introduction:
A number of people have written asking questions regarding the law that is written on the heart. “Isn’t the law written on the heart the Ten Commandments? If it is, then isn’t the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment included in this law?” This is such an important topic that we can only begin to address it in this article. Our goal, as always, is to let Scripture lead us to the correct answer.

The promise of a new covenant is clearly stated in Jeremiah 31:31–34: “Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart; and I will write it, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ‘They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the Lord; ‘for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more.’” The writer of Hebrews states emphatically that this promise has been fulfilled in the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. He quotes Jeremiah with a few subtle changes and adds additional information that will be vitally important in reaching a correct conclusion about the nature of the law written on our hearts.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, “Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:6-13)

When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But when a thing becomes obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a gold

...Paul never grounds the inclusion of the Gentiles into the new covenant promise by their obedience to any of the laws of Sinai. Rather, he always grounds the incorporation of the Gentiles into the gospel by way of the faith of Abraham.

First the insights:
• The old covenant in view is the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant, not the Abrahamic Covenant.
• The new covenant has a better ministry; is a better covenant, and is enacted on better promises.
• The new covenant is not like (is different from) the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai.
• In the new covenant God’s laws will be written in our minds and on our hearts.
• In the new covenant God will be our God and we will be His people.
• In the new covenant we will not teach our fellow citizen and brother saying, “Know the Lord,” for all will know Him.
• In the new covenant there will be no preferential understanding of God. All will be able to know the Lord.
• In the new covenant God will be merciful to our iniquities and remember our sins no more.
• The new covenant makes the first covenant obsolete. The old is terminated with the coming of the new.
• Included in the first (called old in other places in the NT) covenant were the tabernacle furniture and utensils. In the new covenant these are obsolete.
• Included in the first covenant were the tables of the covenant (the Ten Commandments).

Now for the questions:
• Who is to be included in the new covenant? Is the new covenant only for “the house of Israel” and “the house of Judah”? Is this promise also for the Gentiles who accept Christ?
• To what do “mind” and “heart” refer? What exactly is “the law” that will be written on the minds and hearts of the people included in the new covenant?
• Does the law written on the heart of new covenant Christians differ from the law that was written on stone? If so, in what way is it different?
• How does the law written on the heart relate to “natural
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the only One who can save us from this fallen, cursed, sin-sick world. He is the only One who can save us from our desperately wicked selves and the self-deception to which we are doomed. “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete and He is the only head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.”

The walk with Christ is a radical thing. He is the reason we are here. He made us. He is our Creator. He is our breath and our life, and He has plans for us.

How do we learn to follow Jesus?

But how do we walk, run, eat, and breath Jesus Christ in this world that tugs all of our senses in every direction, erecting many idols of the heart causing us to worship things other than the God we love? The hymn writer has said, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart, Oh take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above.” Living for Jesus alone requires that we learn to fear God correctly, and as we learn to fear God, we learn how to live for Jesus and to follow Him out of bondage into freedom.

What does it mean to fear God? Scripture explains by revealing God and His will. After all, the Bible is our only objective source of information about Him. The Bible reveals that fearing God involves what we know, what we believe, and what we do.

Knowing God includes more than knowing biblical facts about Him. To know God also means to experience Him—His goodness, mercy, and love showered on us in Christ Jesus. As a result of experiencing the mercy and love of Christ, we learn to express our admiration and respect in worshipful veneration of Him, knowing that His grace includes His discipline of us as well as our inheritance of His kingdom (Heb 12:28, 29).

As a child of God I know that He disciplines me. I know that if I suffer, He is disciplining me to trust Him. If I disobey the Lord Jesus, He will reprove, discipline, and “scourge” me (Heb 12:3-6). Yet this discipline is part of His grace that transforms me when I am His son. My experience of knowing God and experiencing Jesus includes realizing that He loves me and disciplines me as a true Father, and these two things are both parts of His grace to me. My knowing God and experiencing Him as my Father are part of what it means to fear God.

Believing God involves understanding the Biblical data about God through the work of His grace and of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. He gives us understanding so we know and believe that the fear of God involves justice and fairness (Lev 25:17). It also means walking in His statutes and...
loving and serving Him (Dt 10:12). It involves departing from evil (Job 28:28) and rejoice with trembling in deference to His high holiness. (Ps 3:11). We rest entirely in His mercy, (Ps 33:18). When I was a Seventh-day Adventist, I did not know how exquisitely I needed to REST entirely in God's mercy. This resting is the fulfillment of the fourth commandment. It can and must happen every day of the week, and it is our only hope. Therefore, paying careful attention to what the Bible actually says about the fourth commandment is important. The fourth commandment is the sign of the Mosaic Covenant which we now know is obsolete in the new covenant (Lv 23:3-7; Heb8:13).

The fear of God also involves doing. It is not enough merely to be a moralist and “do” the Ten Commandments. Instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we faithfully do the commandments of Jesus, including those concerning our love for God and our love for each other as well as our love for the saints in fellowship. For example, Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.” When we allow the Holy Spirit to make our hearts content and share one another's joy and grief without envy or arrogance, He fulfills in us the Spirit to make our hearts content and share one another's life. When we allow the Holy Spirit to make our hearts content and share one another's joy and grief without envy or arrogance, He fulfills in us the commandment to love each other as He loves us in our every circumstance of life.

What keeps us from fearing God?

I understand the commands to fear God by knowing, believing, and doing, and I am committed to performing them by the power of the Holy Spirit. I always bear in mind, however, Romans 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells. For to will is present with me but how to perform what is good I do not find.” This is the struggle: the daily battle between my flesh and my desire to do anything righteously when we try to please God by obedience. Instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we faithfully do the commandments of Jesus, including those concerning our love for God and our love for each other as well as our love for the saints in fellowship. For example, Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.” When we allow the Holy Spirit to make our hearts content and share one another's joy and grief without envy or arrogance, He fulfills in us the new commandment to love one another. Fearing God involves actively doing the will of God as He reveals it in every circumstance of our lives.

Another face of the fear of man is the notion of “self-esteem” which hinges upon other people’s responses to us. Our natural inclination is to think we need other people to buttress our sense of well-being and identity. We need them to fulfill us, we think. This is patently not true; such notions must be rejected and surrendered to Jesus. If we ever feel that we might be exposed as imposters, pretenders, hypocrites—people who are not quite what we have trumpeted ourselves up to be, the antidote is to rest more in Christ. We must fall back on Him and cry, “I am not able! I am helpless, but you are supreme and mighty, Lord; save my soul.”

Choose you this day

Do you see two distinct decisions because of what other people might think, or are you resolute, firm, and confident in your decision-making? Many an Adventist has made his decision by walking down the sawdust trail, giving his heart to Jesus—only later to come up defeated and even shipwrecked in his faith. As long as a person remains committed to a religion that puts people into bondage to rules made obsolete by Christ Jesus, he/she is fearing man rather than God. He asks us to run toward Jesus. Only in Christ alone is there freedom and victory.

Choose you today whom you will serve—God or a system contrived by mere men.†

Geoffrey Drew is a family physician from Simi Valley California. Born and raised in South Africa, he was a Seventh-day Adventist for 32 years. He attended Patterson Park Adventist School (1959-60), Sedan High School (1961, 1963-65), Helderberg College (1965-67) and Walla Walla College (1970-73). He did medical research at Loma Linda University (1973-75) and has been practicing in Thousand Oaks for 17 years. He and his wife Holly attend Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California.

The reason you should leave the Adventist church is to run towards Jesus.

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 13, 2007, at a party in their home. Over 60 people attended including their two sons, Bruce and Mike and their families, and Carolyn’s four sisters. Guests ranged from former colleagues at Monterey Bay Academy to members of their Bible study group at their local church. After a lasagna lunch, Dale and Carolyn exchanged vows and tributes which we share below, and Carolyn showed a slide show she created beginning with pictures of the Valentine she gave Dale when she was in the third grade and he was in fourth. They exchanged vows in which they committed to fulfill the last half of their verbal contracts with each other to live together for the first 100 years. They promised to continue to love each other as well as their sons, daughters-in-law and grand children—Bruce, Denise, Melissa, and Leonnard; Mike, Sandy, Ericka, and Kenny—for the rest of their lives with the grace and blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Carolyn’s Tribute

My Dearest Dale,

Thank you for 50 wonderful years of marriage. Never did I dream when that cute boy in the fourth grade when I was in the 3rd grade that we would be here today celebrating our love, especially since you moved away during the school year.

Your caring, thoughtfulness, patience, honesty, courage to stand for the right, commitment to seeking truth, and sense of humor all are an inspiration to me and cause me to love you more each day.

I thank God He led our family to move to the same town as your family when we were in high school and that we shared so many fun times in our teenage years.

Today I think of our love for each other, my heart overflows with thankfulness to you and to God.

I Love You.

Dale’s Tribute

Carolyn,

Since I first met you, you have been esteemed in my eyes. The childhood attraction I had for you when I was in fourth grade turned into love when we were in high school. Our mutual desire to serve God, my admiration of your trustworthy character, your high moral values, your compelling smile, our interest in the beauty of nature and the many fun times we had together led me to want you for my life partner. Yes, we followed the counsel of our teachers when they told us we were getting too serious and did not date for many months. However, after I had a chance to evaluate a few other girls, I decided that no one else would do but you alone. After my first year in college we got married. That was 50 years ago, but I can still smell the limburger cheese my “best man” smeared on the manifold, the door handles, the hood release, and the trunk latch of that 1950 Studebaker. We were young and broke, but we had each other, and we were incredibly happy.

Some years later, our family expanded, and Bruce and Mike enlarged the circumference of our love and the scope of our happiness. And now, having added two daughters and four grand children—what a wonderful family we have.

Carolyn, our journey over the past 50 years has taken us down many winding roads, over hills and through valleys, but we happily traveled the road together. Even when we made a few wrong turns, we can now see that God was working all things together for good. Now, Carolyn, after 50 years of marriage you are more dearly esteemed than ever. I love you more than the spoken word can tell. I don’t know what lies ahead, but I do know that I am committed to love you, provide for you and care for you to the best of my ability, and yes, I really do love you, really do, and I always will.†
I praise God today and will not cease, for the freedom in Christ into which he eventu-
ally led us, for the unspeakable glory of His grace and the preciousness of the authentic
gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Compared to the burden Adventism lays
upon a person, Christ’s yoke is as light as balsam wood!

Kudos for Easter Proclamation!
I just finished reading the
(March/April 2007 issue) and
had a couple of kudos I’d like
Adventism is not my background.
legalism and Mormonism are.
Paul and Terry Mlir’s story
was so well put together I’m
praying for an opportunity to share
it with members who are new to
Adventism. I have encountered
many, many rebel and remain,
but that’s another story.

Someone in this same issue
found fault with the issue of
diet. Perhaps some members put
undue emphasis on that subject,
but it is very rare. In fact, I feel it
is somewhat neglected as a matter
of mind, but for health. Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,
and defilement of it is risky busi-
ness, both from a health standpoint and a spiritual basis. People are dying like flies from diseases that have been shown to originate in the diet.

April 2007

March/April 2007 issue
Back issues are available at
LIFEAssuranceMinistries.org

Jess and Bonnie Dixon have been sweethearts since they were sophomores in Glendale Union (now Adventist) Academy in Glendale, California, and will celebrate their 48th anniversary in August. Jess achieved the Outstanding Student award while serving in the U.S. Army. They have four children and twelve grandchil-
dren. Attending retirement, Bonnie heads up the Receivin.
department in the Library of Cal State University. They
have lived in Bakersfield, California since 1982. They currently worship with a small congregation of the
Presbyterian Church in America.

Nathanal Tinker

No Seventh-day Adventist believes all of the doctrines and teach-
ings of Seventh-day Adventism. For example, Ellen White claimed to be a messianic prophet (as a prophet) for the Holiness movement. She made some very preposterous claims including her vision of the exis-
tence of human life on Jupiter or Saturn and her statements that
cheese should never be introduced into the stomach, and
that drug medication must be abandoned. We now know from scient-
ific observations that the conditions are impossible for life to exist on
Jupiter or Saturn. Further, we know that drug medicine is essential for
many medical conditions—and ironically, Adventists now run a
major health university which includes a medical school and a
school of pharmacy. In addition, cheese is considered an important
part of the food pyramid—and ironically again, Adventists
have tended to eat more cheese than they would have if they had not avoided meat. Ellen
White’s claims that she saw humans on Jupiter or Saturn, that cheese was unfit for
food and that drug medication must be abandoned cannot be true, but true
prophets or “messengers” are people who prophesy truth.

If a person is to believe all of Adventism then he must believe the prophets who defined it. Since no Adventist believes all the prophecies and revelations of
the Adventist prophets, no Adventist believes all the components of Adventism. Thus, it
is possible to call oneself an Adventist and be an Adventist even though he
does not believe all the Adventist beliefs. In other words, it is a facet of Adventism not to
believe all Adventist beliefs.

It is irresistible that there is falsehood in Adventism. A little yeast works through-
out all the dough, and so there is no truth in something which is partly false. The Bible
says that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and a religion whose tenets and
participants are divided between truth and error cannot stand.

1 Ellen G. White, Early Writings, pp. 39–40; Wind to the Little Rock, p. 22

2 Ellen G. White, Ministry of Healing, p. 162; Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 7, p. 68

3 Ellen G. White, Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 6, p. 311; Counsels on Health, p. 261
Proclamation! changed my life

Please put me on your mailing list. I received your last issue (March/April, 2007), and it has changed my life. I don’t even know why, I was not dissatisfied in the church I had grown up in, married and raised my children in. But something has happened to me since I started down this road. This will be one of the most difficult things I have done in my life. In the past three weeks since I read it, it has been hard to think of anything else. I have so enjoyed the devotions on your website (ProclaimingMinistries.org) and browsed some of the articles and back issues. But so many questions are coming clear, and the third morning after I had first felt this way, I woke up and for the first time in my life, 1 Corinthians 5:17 was coming true in my life—a new creature. Amazing!

Now I don’t know what to do or where to go from here, my husband and 2 oldest daughters know of my thoughts... He is sympathetic... but not sure where he stands. He grew up with a very different kind of dad who taught him unlegalistical... and for the first time in my life, 1 Corinthians 5:17 had me laughing and crying... that He gave Himself... rather than His son? Did God split himself in half in order to come to earth and die? I’m not trying to be funny! I appreciate your article, but I think a little more time should have been spent on the traditional view of the Godhead rather than the Adventist view. It would have been more helpful (at least to me) if I knew what Adventists believe. Thank you for your help.

Via Email

Editor’s note: To be sure, the reality of the Trinity is partially hidden in mystery. It is impossible for us three-dimensional, time-bound creations to comprehend the reality of God who is outside of creation and not contained by however many dimensions there are in the universe. We turn the Bible for what we can know about the identity of the Trinity, and we can summarize the Bible’s teachings in three statements: God is three persons, each person is fully God, and there is one God.

God the Father is clearly God from the first verse in Genesis throughout the Bible. He is identified as God, sovereign over all. As you mention, Jesus also prayed to Him while He was on earth. Second, Jesus is fully God. Texts such as John 1:1-4, John 20:28, Colossians 2:9, and Hebrews 1:10 quoting Psalm 102:25 verify His complete deity. And finally, the Holy Spirit is also fully God. Passages such as Acts 5:3-4, Psalm 119:7-8, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, John 3:5-9, and Matthew 28:19 identify the Holy Spirit as fully God. These three persons are not one only in purpose but also in essence and essential nature.

Proclamation! changed my life

I'm confused and hope you can help. I've read your article “Discovering the Adventist Jesus” (May/June, 2007) several times and with interest. What is the traditional Christian view of the Trinity? Am I understanding you correctly when you indicate that there are not three individual figures in the God-head, but only one? And if that is true, then to whom did Jesus pray while on earth? And what about John 3:16? "Wouldn’t it be a more appropriate wording be... that He gave Himself... rather than His son? Did God split himself in half in order to come to earth and die? I’m not trying to be funny! I appreciate your article, but I think a little more time should have been spent on the traditional view of the Godhead rather than the Adventist view. It would have been more helpful (at least to me) if I knew what Adventists believe. Thank you for your help.

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As I ate the bread and drank the grape juice during communion later, the Lord Jesus washed away my lingering shame with my tears.

As I ate the bread and drank the grape juice during communion later, the Lord Jesus washed away my lingering shame with my tears. His own body is my strength, and His blood is the guarantee that no measure of my sin, my disbelief or my emotions will be able to destroy me. I am secure in Him. Jesus Himself is the reality in which I can stand when I am tempted to give way to fear or failing.

As God taught me through Gary’s sermon and the memory of Elizabeth’s words, as Jesus reminded me during communion that He has washed me and is keeping me, I was experiencing the miracle of the new covenant. No longer is God’s command to me written in stone and kept in an ark. Jesus Himself lives in me in the person of the Holy Spirit. From the time He began to remind me to pray to know what is true as a rote act of obedience, I began to say the words: “Please help me know what is true.”

Conviction struggled with self-pity, but finally, “Please help me know what is true.” Conviction struggled with self-pity, but finally, “Please help me know what is true.” I simultaneously realized that the immediate dependence on me to get it done. I got up and began to feel emotional. As God’s servant, I am to give way to fear or failure.

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Each year our church hosts a Day Camp for primary and middle school children. This year I taught a class called “Life in the Palace”—an attempt to instruct young girls on simple manners and table etiquette.

I asked what they would do if they were eating at a friend’s house and were served something they didn’t like. The answers included things they wouldn’t do: make a face like their brother or push it away!

One little girl named Kelli answered the question dramatically saying, “Oh my God, that’s terrible cooking!” She was all of 7 years old, and her words took me by surprise! I felt sad that so young a child could roll those words so easily off her lips. I was angry at the adults in her life or the TV programs she had watched that modeled this hasty phrase. I was irritated that someone had not explained to her how holy the God of the universe is and how wrong it is to speak of Him so carelessly.

Calling on God without knowing Him

Do you hear this phrase as much as I do? Have you noticed how it comes from both spiritual pagans and professing Christians in our day and age? Does it strike you as incongruent, for a God-maligning culture like ours, to be so willing to talk about God without knowing Him? Does it seem odd to you that a person who professes to take a stand for believing in and respecting the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would speak the Name of his/her God so thoughtlessly?

It’s an interesting fact that the culture in which we live is not too fond of God—at least not the God of the Bible. We repeatedly get that idea from the way people speak of Him! The media works hard to discredit Him by saying it is “the height of intolerance” even to believe in one God and “the height of arrogance” to parade Him in public! The ACLU works hard to keep God and God-words out of schools, public buildings and front yards, yet a healthy slice of our population continuously claims its “freedom of speech” to mention God in conversation without knowing Him as the one true God of heaven and earth who revealed Himself in creation, in the Bible, and through His Son.

In spite of their ignorance—like the little girl in my class—they talk about Him anyway—relentlessly and persistently!

Does it strike you as incongruent, for a God-maligning culture like ours, to be so willing to talk about God without knowing Him?

Something is very wrong with this picture. My little student’s words reminded me about the seriousness of carelessly crying this phrase out of anger or fear.

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