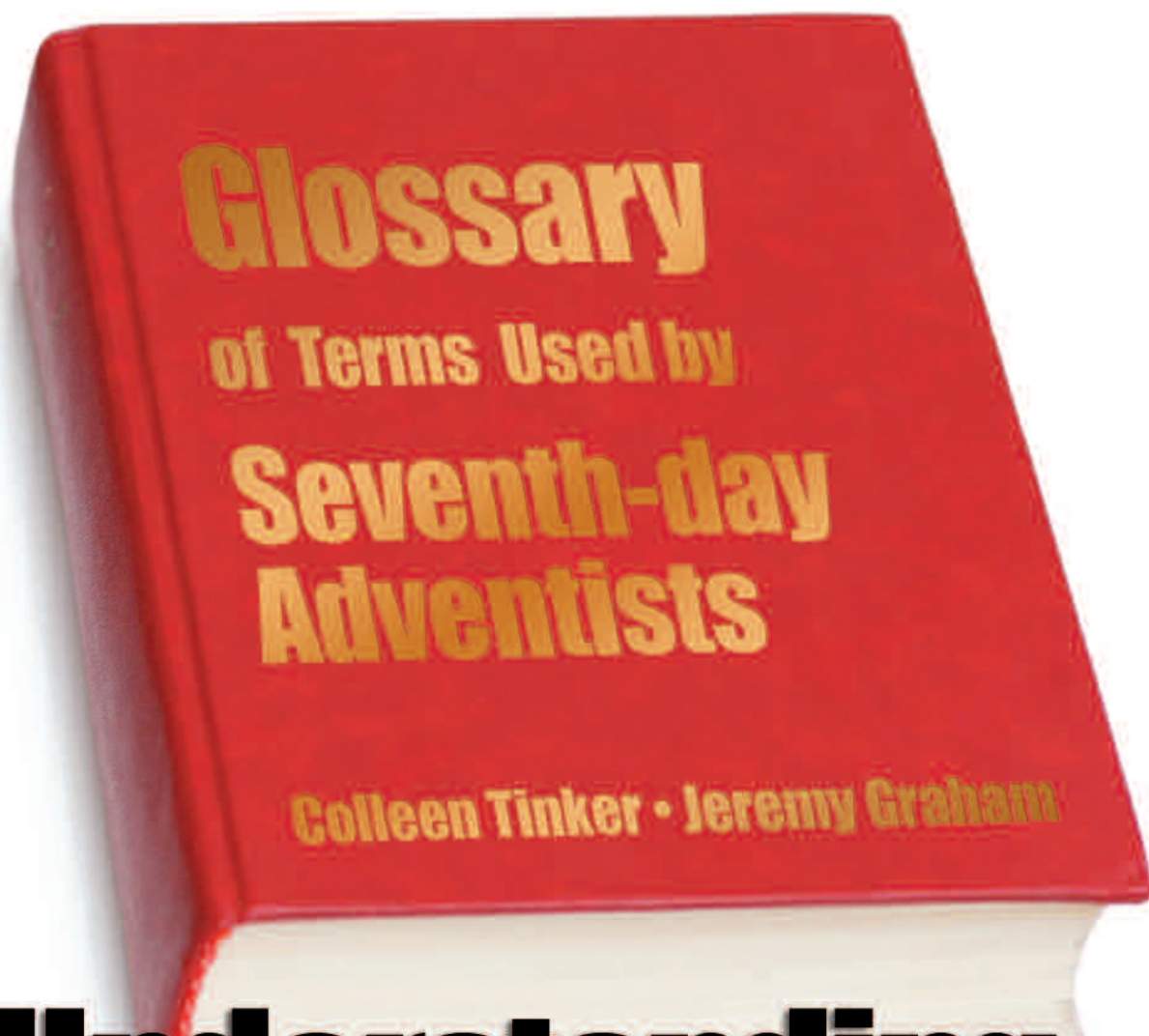


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Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATHARIANS • CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

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Understanding Adventist terms ⁶



Acquitted or condemned by **your words** COLLEEN TINKER

In its effort to be seen as a “normal” evangelical church, Adventism has altered not only the meanings of the words of Christianity but also of the Word of God.

Last Saturday night we were visiting with some of our Adventist relatives. In the process of our discussion, Richard compared Daniel 8:14 as it appears in the English Standard Version (ESV) with the same text as it appears in *The Clear Word* (Clear Word), “an expanded paraphrase of the Bible to nurture faith and growth.” The Clear Word is printed and distributed by the

Adventist denomination’s publishing house Review and Herald Publishing Association and is sold by Adventist Book Centers. In spite of Adventists’ denial that *The Clear Word* is a Bible, it is written like a Bible, with chapters and vers-

es corresponding to “regular” Bibles, and many Adventists and pastors use it, not merely for devotional reading but also for Bible teaching. It is uniquely Adventist because the teachings and interpretations of Ellen White are written into the Bible texts, so the reader cannot tell what is actually in the Bible and what originates in White’s writings.

But I digress. As many people with Adventist backgrounds know, Daniel 8:14, which says, “And he said to me, ‘For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state’” (ESV), has been expanded to read: “He answered, ‘After two thousand, three hundred prophetic days (or two thousand, three hundred years), God will step in, proclaim the truth about Himself and restore the ministry of the Sanctuary in heaven to its rightful place. This is when the judgment will begin, of which the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was a type’” (Clear Word).

Indignant at the violence done to the text and curious about what else might be altered, Richard and I compared more verses after our relatives left. John 4:24 is an example of *The Clear Word*’s subtle alteration of words to yield a completely different meaning. In the ESV this text, which is part of Jesus’ answer to the Samaritan woman at the well when she asked the location of the correct place to worship, reads: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” *The Clear Word* renders the text like this: “God is very much concerned about our spiritual lives and how honest and sincere we are, not about where we worship Him” (Clear Word).

In this verse, *The Clear Word* eliminates the declaration that “God is spirit.” Further, it eliminates the two ways we are to worship God: in spirit and in truth. This statement reveals that humans have spirits—which reflect the image of God—and that the human spirit can and must worship God. It further distinguishes “truth” from “spirit”—a distinction that separates cognitive knowledge of reality from spiritual knowing. This altering of the text is necessary in order to align with the Adventist doctrine that man has no sentient spirit but is merely “body plus breath.”

As Richard and I continued to compare whole chapters, I realized again that Adventism has made an art of altering words. Not only do they have their own “Bible paraphrase” designed to convince its members that Adventism’s doctrines are biblical, but they have become expert at using common Christian words while privately ascribing different meanings to them. This “inside knowledge” of words’ meanings keeps Adventists and the rest of Christianity confused about each other.

In its effort to be seen as a “normal” evangelical church, Adventism has adopted the words of Christianity, but it has altered their meanings and also those of the Word of God. The consequences of this disregard for “Word” are serious. Revelation 22:18 says, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,” (ESV). The same verse in *The Clear Word* reads: “I, John, warn everyone who reads or hears the prophetic words in this book not to add *anything contrary* (emphasis added). If they do, God’s seven last plagues will certainly fall on them.” (Clear Word)

In this issue we examine 18 words which have different meanings within Adventism than they have in the Christian community. Dale Ratzlaff discusses the proper use of the Old Testament for a new covenant Christian, and Terry Mirra explores the subtle but pervasive issue of pride. Carol Fussell shares her story of God saving her both physically and spiritually, and Philemon Aroni of Kenya shares his testimony of trusting God.

We pray that as you read, God will convict you of the eternal truth of His Word and that you will honor God by using words with integrity.

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Mt 12:36-37, ESV).

†

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Jesus is the Firstborn

Q. In a recent conversation with a reader of *Proclamation!* it was stated that he did not agree with the presentation of the Trinity in the May/June, 2007, *Proclamation!*. He said that Christ was only the "image of the invisible God," and was "the first-born of all creation." (Col. 1:15). Therefore, he felt that the early leaders of Adventism were correct in their Arian position that Christ was the first-created being and then was later exalted by the Father. What does Colossians 1:15 mean, "And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation"?

A. Two things are necessary for a correct understanding of this verse. First, we must unpack the triple meaning of "first-born" as used in the Old Testament; and second, we must understand the Greek concept of demigods.

In 1 Samuel 16:11-13 we find that David was the youngest of his brothers. Samuel anointed him, and "from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power." In Psalm 89:19, 20, 27 we read, "I have found David My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him...I also shall make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth." David is called "first born" because God exalted him to be "the highest of the kings of the earth." Here we see that "first-born" has to do with rank, not time. David, the youngest son, is considered "first-born" because he was exalted to be the highest of the kings of the earth.

In Genesis 41:50-52 we find that Manasseh was the older of the two brothers. Yet in Jeremiah 31:9, 20 we find that "Ephraim is My first-born." Why? Because Ephraim was the "dear son" and the "delightful child." So here again, "first-born" is not used for first-in-time, but one who is "most loved" and "most delightful."

A third concept is found by comparing, Genesis 25:25, 32:26-28, and Exodus 4:22. We find that Jacob was the younger of the two brothers. However, because he was "victorious" with the Divine messenger, his name was changed to Israel. After that event he was called the "first-born," meaning the "most victorious."

Combining these three Old Testament usages of "first-born" we can say that by using this term, Paul meant that Christ is the most exalted, the most loved, the most delightful, the victor over all Creation.

Demigods

The Greeks believed in demigods—an inferior god, or a series of lesser gods—that one had to go through to get to the supreme god. Unlike a demigod, however, Jesus is the "first-born," as Colossians 1:15 states. Thus, the New Testament proclaims that "There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). He is not a 'lesser god.' He is exalted, loved, and victorious, and He opened a new, living way to the Father (Hebrews 10:20).

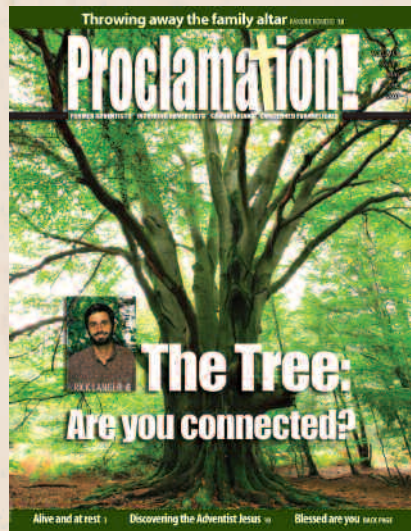
Jesus is not only the "first-born" of creation (Col. 1:15). In Hebrews 1:6-8 we read, "And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him.' And of the angels He says, Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire." But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom." Jesus is also said to be "first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev. 1:5).

We conclude, therefore, that the New Testament designations of Christ as the "first-born" of creation, of the Father, and from the dead, are NOT designed to show that Christ was a created being or in any way inferior to God; rather they show His superiority as the victorious, exalted, only

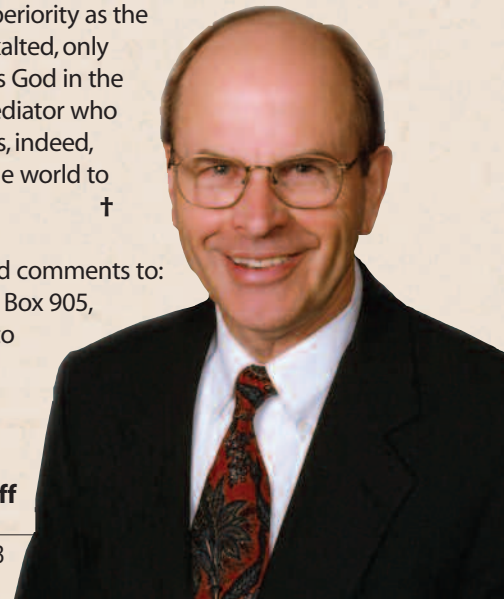
beloved Son of the Father, who is God in the flesh and is our one and only mediator who has released us from our sins! Yes, indeed, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..." (2 Cor. 5:19) †

Send your Bible questions and comments to: *Proclamation!*, Ask the Pastor, PO Box 905, Redlands, California 92373. Due to limited magazine space, not all questions can be published.

Pastor Dale Ratzlaff



The May/June 2007 issue of *Proclamation!* is available to view and download at: www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org. You will need to have Adobe™ Reader™ installed (may be obtained from the Adobe website for free).



The only time I've ever audibly heard God's voice, He said, "Don't be afraid." It was over 15 years ago. I was nearly 30 and was overwhelmed and weary of trying to be what I thought I had to be in order to be accepted by God. I had spent my entire life trying to be good enough but was a complete failure. I had a young daughter and was certain she, too, would be lost just as I would be because of my inability to obey God and keep his commandments consistently. As I had many times before, I lay on my bed sobbing and desperately pleading with God at least to save my little girl. In my anguish and despair I was sure I was feeling the hopeless and unbearable reactions of the lost at the end of time, the gnashing of teeth described in God's word. I was more hysterical and out of control than I had ever been, and I heard a voice say, "Don't be afraid." It was so clear and strong that for the first time in my life, I felt peace. At that moment I knew without a doubt that God was going to rescue me, although I had no idea when or how.

A couple of years later, early in the 90's, I went through a painful, unexpected divorce. I suffered the most emotional agony I had ever experienced, and I did not believe I could survive. I finally gave up on myself and gave my life to the Lord. I knew He was my only hope. For the first time I was truly born again and filled with God's Spirit. I was re-baptized into the Adventist church and started attending a contemporary congregation where the gospel was more clearly preached. I began to have a good understanding of salvation and felt confident in my faith.

I had been raising my daughter in a very non-Adventist way; we ate meat, watched whatever we wanted on TV during Sabbath hours, grocery shopped Saturday mornings, wore jewelry, and so on. I was determined my daughter would not grow up questioning God's love and acceptance, as I had, feeling as if she could never measure up. I also determined she would understand His unconditional love, His mercy, and His grace so following Him would not seem to be an impossible burden. Therefore, even though I returned to the Adventist church, I did not change anything else about the way we lived. Surprisingly, even with my background, I felt no guilt and knew that God loved and accepted me unconditionally.



Don't be AFRAID

CAROL FUSSELL

© STOCK PHOTO.COM/SUSAN CAMPBELL

Not long after my return to the church, God brought an incredible Christian man into our lives who became my best friend and greatest hero on this earth. Wayne and I were married in early 1995 and began the stressful job of blending families. My daughter and I would attend the Adventist church on Saturdays, and Wayne would usually join us. He then attended a Baptist Church on Sundays with his children. I was certain of his godliness and knew it was just a matter of time before God would bring him into the

fold of the true church. At times I would try to argue with him about the Sabbath, but I didn't know my Bible nearly as well as he did and never won any debates.

The veil lifts

Then, in the late 90's, my brother-in-law and sister left the Adventist church. I was shocked and heartbroken. I couldn't understand how anyone who knew the truth could ever abandon it. My brother-in-law Jay sent me some books about Ellen White and about the new covenant as well as some intense Bible studies on tape about the new covenant. When I first received these materials, I believed they were Satanic and was fearful even to look at them. Wayne understood, though, and frequently reminded me that God does not give us a spirit of fear. I finally realized I could not only look at but also listen to the materials, and God would protect me from being deceived. With that assurance, I set out to prove my sister and her husband wrong!

As I read about Ellen White, I became convinced that she was not a prophet of God and therefore had to be a false prophet. I would not have studied further if I had not come to this realization. After letting go of EGW and asking God's Spirit to lead me in my study and show me truth, everything suddenly made sense. It amazed me that the Bible had been so unclear all my life. While in Adventism it seemed we were always jumping through hoops trying to support our beliefs; but now, God's word clearly stated the differences between the old covenant and the New. I was instantly free! The veil was lifted. I knew I was no longer obligated to worship on Saturday. Jesus had come to fulfill the law! I found hope and peace in Galatians, especially chapters 3 and 4. Paul says in Galatians 1:12, "For my message came by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ himself." Paul

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warns the Galatians not to be fooled by those who twist and change the truth concerning Christ (Gal. 1 :7) and declares that anyone who tries to change the Good News should be cursed (Gal. 1:8)! These are strong words, and I believe the Adventist church, and especially Ellen White, have perverted the "Good News."

Additionally I found truth in Hebrews 4 and 8. The old covenant is obsolete, and in the new covenant Christ is our rest TODAY (4:7). We are no longer bound by a weekly Sabbath or the law, but

Jesus is our Sabbath rest, every day, every minute. Another truth I found was in II Corinthians 3:6-18: the first covenant was glorious, but the new covenant of the Spirit is even more glorious. Verse 14 describes much of the Adventist church, "But the people's minds were hardened, and even to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, a veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ." I found further understanding in Romans 7:4-6 and Colossians 2:16-17; Sabbath was only a shadow of God's rest foreshadowing the real thing: Christ Himself. All I can do is thank God and praise Him! The veil has been lifted!

It has been six years since the veil was lifted and I found freedom in Christ. He has walked with me every step, and recently He showed me again his power and relentless love.

Brain surgery

It was April, 2006. My allergies had flared up, and Tuesday morning I had a coughing spell that brought on what I thought was a migraine. The pain was so intense I vomited uncontrollably. I drove to the hospital where a CAT scan revealed nothing, so I went home with a prescription for pain medication. On Saturday I collapsed when my head seemed to explode with pain. My husband decided I needed to go to emergency, but I could no longer walk. Wayne helped me

down the stairs in a sitting position and maneuvered me into the car.

An MRI revealed a mass, presumed to be a tumor. I was transferred to another hospital for brain surgery during which the doctor found not a tumor but an arterial-venous malformation that had burst. We were later told that most people do not survive this condition.

Sometimes I get discouraged, and I feel as if my life will never be normal again. Then I take a look back.

I remember the tests and unbearable pain before surgery, and

through my fog I remember Wayne and my daughter Mary coming to see me. Wayne kissed me and told me he would always love me.

I remember waking up in ICU, unable to turn my head to keep from vomiting on myself. I remember being taken on a stretcher back & forth to various places for tests, not knowing where I was or what was happening. Voices kept telling me to stop moving and then would become angry, telling me the tests would last even longer if I didn't remain still, but I didn't understand what I was supposed to do.

Later I became aware that Wayne was with me. I knew he was my husband, but I couldn't remember how we met. He read me a letter from my mom, but I couldn't picture her house. For that matter, I could not picture our own house. I talked on the phone with people I felt certain I should know, but I was never sure. I couldn't feed myself, and food even tasted different. I didn't understand where Wayne went when he left for work or when he would return. It felt as if I spent hours each day just trying to figure out the basic facts of my life.

Rehab was a nightmare. I hated the wheelchair. Besides my not seeing well, my left side would not work, and I constantly crashed into things. I would become so uncomfortable that I would begin to panic. Once I squirmed and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Originally from Southern Illinois, **Carol Fussell** has made Georgia her home for the past 23 years. Carol and her husband Wayne have four grown children and an unruly Boxer that Carol adores and Wayne tolerates! They attend Riverstone church in Marietta, Georgia, where they shepherd 3rd grade boys. Carol says: "I recently reached a milestone and am using a cane instead of a walker. Returning to work has been the best therapy for me, and I have faith God is continuing to complete His work in me."



Understanding Adventist terms

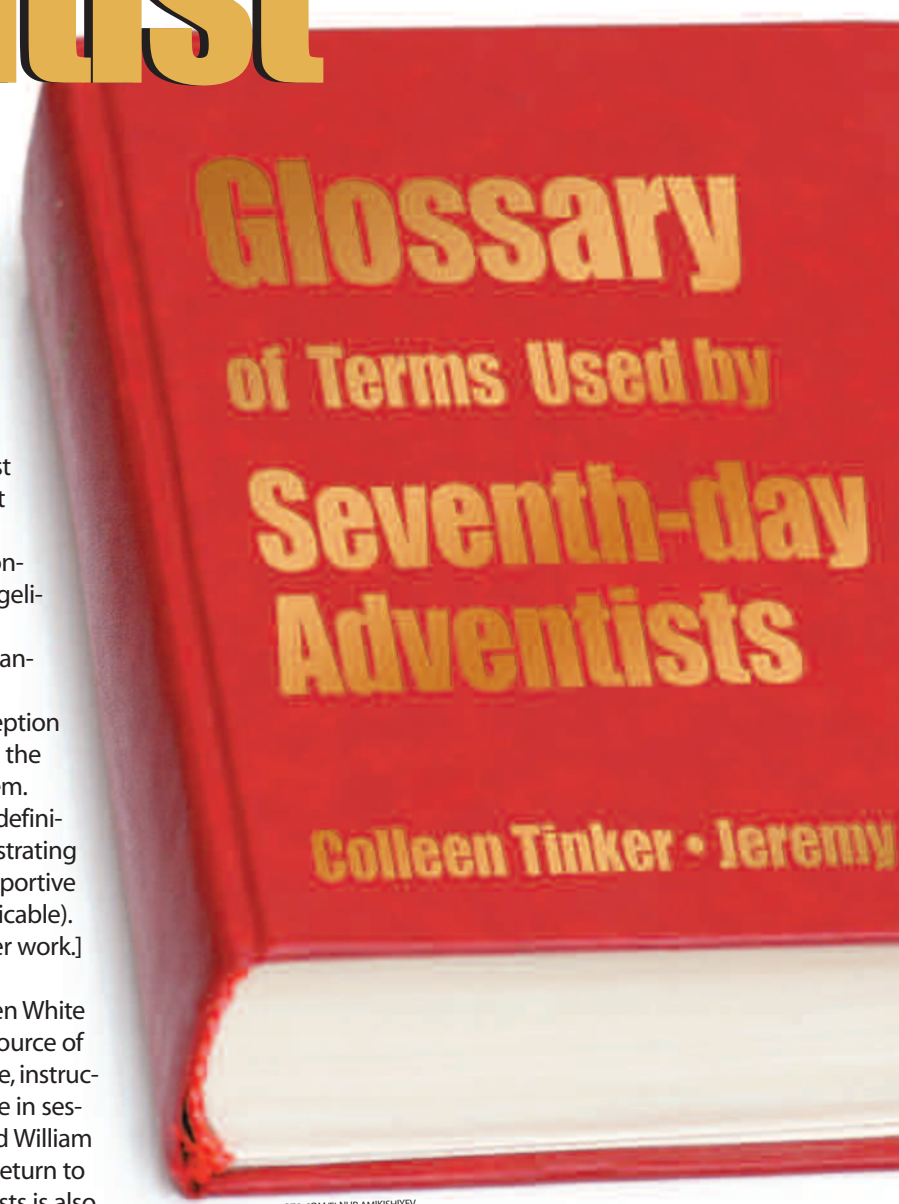
COLLEEN TINKER
JEREMY GRAHAM

In this article we share a (non-comprehensive) list of terms which, within Adventism, have different definitions than they have in evangelical Christianity. This difference in definitions results in confusion among mainstream Christians. When an evangelical hears an Adventist use these words, he or she assumes the Adventist means the same thing the evangelical means. In reality, the Adventist usually means something different, thus perpetuating the misperception that Adventists understand the gospel and salvation the same way the Christian community understands them.

We will give each word followed by its Adventist definition, quotations from Adventist publications demonstrating these uses (if necessary), and footnotes showing supportive sources. The evangelical definition will follow (if applicable). [This article is not derived from a book or other larger work.]

Authority: A confusing blend of the Bible and of Ellen White whose writings “are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.” It is also the General Conference in session, according to Ellen White. Further, EGW identified William Miller’s 1843 chart and message of Jesus’ imminent return to be authoritative. The experience of the early Adventists is also considered authoritative.¹

Colleen Tinker is editor of *Proclamation!* magazine. **Jeremy Graham** was born in Loma Linda, California, and was raised in Seventh-day Adventism. However, the Lord set him free in the truth of Jesus Christ in 2003. He currently lives in east-central Arizona, and is now glad to be called a Christian.



Glossary
of Terms Used by
Seventh-day
Adventists
Colleen Tinker • Jeremy

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Evangelical: The Bible is considered the only authoritative objective source of truth. (2 Timothy 3:16)²

Backslider: Anyone who once believed the Adventist doctrine and then doesn’t attend church.

Example: “These volunteers visit three people per week (non-Adventist or backslider) inviting them to church and mak-

ing the necessary contacts within the Church Family to provide for their presence with the Church Family.”³

Communion: Sometimes called Quarterly Service, Ordinance of humility, or simply ordinances. Includes taking the “emblems” (bread and grape juice) after participating in foot-washing.⁴

Evangelical: Celebrating the Lord’s Supper. Does not include footwashing. [“T]hat part of the Eucharistic rite in which the consecrated bread and wine are distributed to participants”⁵ (Matthew 26:26-30).

Discouraged: Any person who has not actively started “breaking” the Sabbath but hasn’t been in church for several weeks or months and is in danger of apostasy.

Example: “‘Heart Call’ is our division-wide reclamation program. It’s a program prepared to reach out to 20,000 women who may have become discouraged and have not been attending church, or whose names have been removed from church records. They are our sisters, our daughters, our friends—and WE WANT THEM BACK!”⁶

Evangelical: Any believer who feels overwhelmed and needs encouragement to remember that the Lord Jesus is still holding and walking with him or her (Eph. 3:10-13).

Everlasting gospel: The Three Angels’ Messages⁷ (see below).

Evangelical: The gospel of the Lord Jesus as recorded in the New Testament (1 Cor. 15:1-8, Col. 1:21-23).

Hope (as in “We have this hope”):

The eventual second coming and the possibility/desire that one will be found ready to go to heaven at that time; the eventual vindication of Adventism itself.

Example: “I will never advocate the popular theory that it does not matter what doctrine men espouse, if they only have faith. ‘Faith without works is dead, being alone.’ Genuine faith will be expressed by good works. We are looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of

the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. We may not be living when Christ shall come in power and great glory, for all are subject to death at any time, but if we are righteous, in harmony with the law of God, we shall respond to the voice that will call the people of God from their graves, and shall come forth to receive immortality. It is only the blessed and holy who will be ready for the first resurrection; for when Christ comes, he will not change the character. The change

that will take place will be that change spoken of by Paul when he says: ‘We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.’ The word of God declares that we must be found blameless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Now we are to learn obedience, submission to the divine will, that God may work in us to will and to do of his good-pleasure, and that we may work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. But our own efforts are of no avail to atone for sin or to renew the heart. Only the blood of Christ can atone for us; his grace alone can create in us a clean heart, and enable us to obey God’s law. In him is our only hope.”⁸

Evangelical: the return of Jesus and our security of eternity with Him (Col. 1:27; Tit. 1:1,2; 2:13; Heb. 6:13-20).

Inspiration (as in “Inspiration says...” or “from the pen of Inspiration ...”): Always a reference to Ellen G. White without overtly saying her name. Sometimes referred to as “My favorite author...” or “A great Christian writer has said...”

Example: “Pen of inspiration: Colloquial phrase used to describe the writings of Ellen G. White, and should not be used when writing for the public.”⁹

Evangelical: A reference to the prophetic gifting from God to the writers of the Bible resulting in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).

The message: Adventist health message, Three Angels Messages, and other unique doctrines.

Example: “When young people preach the Adventist message, they remain in the Seventh-day Adventist Church — when we entrust them with the message.”¹⁰

Evangelical: The good news of salvation through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:18; Heb. 4:1,2). Currently refers also to a paraphrase of the Bible by Eugene Peterson.

Right arm of the message (or of the Gospel): The health message which includes abstinence from unclean meats (and preferably all meat and even dairy products), caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco and an emphasis on lifestyle and medical work which is considered a primary “witnessing” method to attract new members.

Example: “Health evangelism is a ministry that changes people. Health evangelism improves health, prevents disease and lengthens life. Health evangelism results in a knowledge of and a deeper experience with God. Health evangelism results in baptisms and church growth. Health evangelism is the right arm of the gospel.”¹¹

New birth: A nebulous term with variable meanings including being raised to new life through Adventist baptism, “conversion” to Adventism, accepting Jesus and the “full truth” of Adventism, successive times of new beginnings, etc.

The one fool-proof way for a Christian to begin to understand what an Adventist really means when he speaks of salvation is literally to study the Bible with him. Unless one grapples with the actual text of Scripture with an Adventist, the true nature of Adventist theology and biblical interpretation will not be clear.

Example: "God has opened the way for us to receive help from the source of all power. He has accepted his people in the beloved. Those who thus unite with the church by baptism are sealed as men and women who have been born again, of water and of the Spirit. They have entered upon a new life. They are to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust. They are to keep themselves free from every dishonest practice. Their example is to be a continual witness to the power of heavenly grace. The spirit of truth is to control them."¹²

Evangelical: Being indwelt by the Holy Spirit upon trusting in Christ and thus being brought from spiritual death to life—a new creation born of God (Jn. 3:5-7; 1:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1-5).

Sanctification: The Holy Spirit helps the believer keep the Ten Commandments increasingly well until one perfectly reflects the character of Christ (i.e. ideally sins no more).

Example: "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."¹³

Evangelical: Legal—Counted holy by God when one is alive in Christ. (Rom. 15:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:10)
Experiential—the process of learning to live by the Spirit instead of by the sinful nature (1 Thess. 4:3-6; 5:23).

Seal of God: Sabbath-keeping (sometimes now called "the sign of the seal of God")

Example: "Thus the distinction is drawn between the loyal and the disloyal. Those who desire to have the seal of God in their foreheads must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Thus they are distinguished from the disloyal, who have accepted a manmade institution in place of the true Sabbath. The observance of God's rest day is a mark of distinction between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not (RH April 23, 1901)."¹⁴

Evangelical: The indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22).

Spirit (human): A person's breath/life force which leaves the body and goes to God upon death. It is not conscious nor can it exist apart from the body. It is no different from the breath of an animal. (Analogous to electricity—pull the plug on an appliance, and it stops.)¹⁵ (See also "State of the Dead" below.)

Evangelical: The insubstantial part of a person which is able to respond to God and to know Jesus. The spirit can worship and discern spiritual truth; it goes to be with Jesus when a person dies. It bears the image of God who is spirit (Jn. 4:24; Lk. 23:46; Ac. 7:59-60; 2 Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:21-24).

Spirit of Prophecy: Almost always a reference to Ellen White's writings (as a fulfillment of Rev. 12:17 and 19:10).

Example: "To enhance Adventist identity and increase spirituality among church members, delegates voted a conceptual plan to print and distribute two million sets of 10 Spirit of Prophecy books at a price affordable to members in every country. The initiative is called 'Connecting With Jesus'....[S]urveys demonstrate, however, that most church members believe that the Spirit of Prophecy is 'an authority for the Adventist Church today' and that there is a relationship between a strong spiritual life/mission emphasis and members regularly reading Spirit of Prophecy books. The objective of 'Connecting With Jesus' is to challenge every member to recapture a personal vision for helping Adventism fulfill its prophetic mission."¹⁶

Evangelical: It is the truth from and about Jesus, the testimony of Jesus which every believer has (see Rev. 19:10).

State of the dead: Core belief which holds that when a person dies, his body goes into the ground, his breath returns to God, and his "soul" (personality) ceases to exist until the resurrection. Nothing sentient or conscious remains; man dies as an animal dies. It borders on annihilation.¹⁷

Evangelical: To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:21-24).

Three Angels' Messages: The messages of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12; "The gospel in verity". Adventists claim these messages contain the essence of the "gospel": The hour of God's judgment has come (October 22, 1844; investigative judgment of believers); worship the Creator (includes sanctifying the seventh day—call to Sabbatarianism). Babylon is fallen (apostate churches who worship on Sunday). Those who worship the beast (papacy) and his image ("apostate" Protestants) receive his mark (Sunday-keeping) and will suffer torment forever (until they are annihilated). The saints are those who obey God's commandments (most notably keep the seventh day) and (thus) remain faithful to Jesus. The Three Angels' Messages also include "the health reform".

Example: "This is the passage [Rev. 14:7-10] we call the 'Three Angels' Messages.' These are the verses that contain the reason for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist church. No other church is proclaiming these three messages. In no other church will you hear these messages explained."¹⁸

The truth: Adventist doctrine, i.e. a person who left Adventism “left the truth”; a person baptized Adventist “found the truth.”

Example: “We are to be established in the faith, in the light of the truth given us in our early experience. At that time one error after another pressed in upon us; ministers and doctors brought in new doctrines. We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance. Companies of devoted men and women assembled for this purpose. The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.”¹⁹

Evangelical: Reality as embodied in Jesus and recorded in God's word (Jn. 1:14; 5:39-40; 14:6).

The Lord's work/God's work: Advancing the Adventist “message.”

Example: “Krause passes on the plea from Bairagee for spiritual support from the Adventist Church worldwide. ‘Please tell our world believers and request prayer for our new church members in Chittagong Hill Tracts. We trust that in spite of persecution, the Lord's work will continue to flourish.’”²⁰

Evangelical: Advancing the gospel of the Lord Jesus through whatever means God prepared in advance for one to do (Eph. 2:10; 3:7-9; Phil. 3:7-9, 14; 17; 4:18; Rom. 12:1-2).

Conclusion

Adventists use the same words as Christians when they talk about theology and salvation. They have attached private inter-

pretations to these words, so Adventists say them among themselves understanding them within the context of Ellen White-shaped theology. When Christians speak with Adventists, the Christians do not understand that the Adventists are applying this private interpretation, but the Adventist in conversation with a Christian often knows he is reserving a “private understanding” that he is not communicating to the Christian.

Because Adventists are taught that their theology is “the truth,” the fact that they understand the words differently does not cause them discomfort. They believe that they can find “common ground” with Christians by “sounding right,” thus avoiding being marginalized and “misunderstood.” Should the Christian become interested in Adventism, then he would be introduced to Adventist proof-texts and taught the in-house understandings of the normal Christian words.

The one fool-proof way for a Christian to begin to understand what an Adventist really means when he speaks of salvation is literally to study the Bible with him. Unless one grapples with the actual text of Scripture with an Adventist, the true nature of Adventist theology and biblical interpretation will not be clear. As long as Adventists and Christians merely discuss the terms of theology, they may sound similar. When they actually handle the Word of God together, however, the chasm dividing them becomes clear.

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned (Mat. 12:36-37).

†

Endnotes

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- 2 Zukeran, Patrick, “Authority of the Bible,” <http://www.probe.org/content/view/39/77/>
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- 6 (http://www.tagnet.org/aec/women/heartcall_ins.htm); White, Ellen G, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 10-24-93, “Brotherly Love Needed,” par. 7
- 7 http://www.adventist.org/world_church/name_mission/index.html; amended in 2004 to: http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat1.html
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- 9 ANN Style Guide - Glossary” (<http://news.adventist.org/styleguide/glossary.html>) See also: “Holiness Our Destiny,” sermon by Richard O’Ffill (http://www.revivalsermons.org/sermons/holiness_our_destiny.shtml) (<http://mcdonaldroad.org/sermons/01/0623da.htm>); *Lake Union Herald*, Volume 96, Issue 3, March 2004, “New Believer’s Guide to Adventist English” <http://www.lakeunionherald.org/96/3/18023.html> (under “Spirit of Prophecy”); *Adventist Review*, October 5, 2000 (<http://www.adventistreview.org/2000-1545/story2.html>) (Jan Paulsen, General Conference President)
- 10 <http://news.adventist.org/data/2005/03/1113917513/index.html>.en (5th paragraph): Mark Finley, director of the church's Center for Global Evangelism, told church leaders April 13 at Spring Meeting, one of the church's two annual business meetings. See also: White, Ellen G, *Testimonies for the Church Volume Seven*, Ch. 2, Par 4, Pp 54-55; *Testimonies for the Church Volume Six*, ch. 5, Par. 4, p 315; ch. 1., Par. 2, p 19; *Testimonies for the Church Volume Seven*, ch 1, par 3, p 35; *Testimonies for the Church Volume Five*, ch. 75, Par 1, p 591
- 11 *HealthWorks*, “A newsletter published by the Health Ministries Department of the North American Division,” Volume 7, Number 2, March-April 2005, page 1, paragraph 1 <http://www.nadadventist.org/hm/healthworks/HW2q2005.pdf>; See also: <http://www.thequiethour.org/evan/evanopp/healthexpo.php>; <http://www.pacificunion-recorder.com/104/1/17625.html>; http://www.gccsda.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=757&Itemid=2; White, Ellen G, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol 6, p. 288.
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- 08-24-99, par 2; *Ibid*, *The Great Controversy*, ch. 27, "Modern Revivals," par 2, pg. 469; *Ibid*, *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, 11-01-1892, "The Necessity of Co-operation With God (Concluded)" Par 2.
- 14 *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* Vol. 7, "REV14," par. 2, pg. 981. See also: <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-19.htm>; <http://www.andrews.edu/~damsteeg/seal.html>; White, Ellen, *The Signs of the Times*, 03-22-10, par. 4; *Ibid*, *The Signs of the Times*, 03-22-10, par. 4; *Manuscript Releases Volume Nine*, CN 695, par. 1, pg. 88; *Special Testimony to Battle Creek Church*, par. 1, pg 6.
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Don't be afraid FROM PAGE 5

twisted in my wheelchair so much I ended up on the floor.

Nighttime was the worst. After Wayne left I would lie in bed unable to sleep. The TV played programs that seemed simultaneously familiar yet strange. Everything had a surreal quality, and now I wonder if many brain-damaged people feel that way their entire lives.

I could not make a phone call by myself nor dress myself, and for a very long time I could not tie my shoes. They gave me special shoelaces for my shoes that stretched and took away the need to tie.

Next came outpatient therapy. My therapists pushed me, and I hated it—but now I thank them. I would agonize for an hour during recreational therapy over a 30-piece puzzle. Even when I knew where a piece should go, I could not place it on the puzzle—I would try to place it sideways or backwards. This lack of coordination scared me, and I was likewise terrified by my inability to play solitaire. I was very confused by numbers and colors, and I could not do simple math problems.

I was told I would probably need a walker the rest of my life, and I nearly despaired of ever having a normal life again.

In spite of the odds against it, however, I improved. Some thera-



pists urged me to apply for social security disability benefits, but my neurosurgeon, Dr. King, said to go back to work as soon as possible. It would be the best therapy for me, he said—and he was right. Eventually my boss, Karen, helped me fight to get back to work. Without her intercession, I would not have been rehired. To her I will be forever grateful.

Through my long ordeal, Wayne stood by me and sustained me. I know that God brought him into my life to model His unconditional love for me. Doctors and nurses alike have commented on Wayne's devotion and love for me;

he is one of God's most incredible gifts to me.

God is awesome, and so faithful. Not only did He rescue me from spiritual bondage and give me new life in Jesus, but he saved my physical life as well, restoring me to live and work for His glory. I am amazed at His patience, at the way He never gives up on me but continues to show me He is with Me and will never leave me. I shall not fear even death, for nothing can separate me from His love. My salvation is sure!!

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?
Psalm 27:1

†

The problem with Pride

TERRY MIRRA

As I sat in Bible study one evening, the discussion came around to the popular “it’s all about me” T-shirts, and how Christians shouldn’t encourage their children to wear such egocentric slogans. One woman turned beet-red and finally admitted that her daughter had such a shirt. After much embarrassment, we all had a good laugh. It’s an apparently harmless mantra, but it appears to be a barometer of our society’s paradigm.

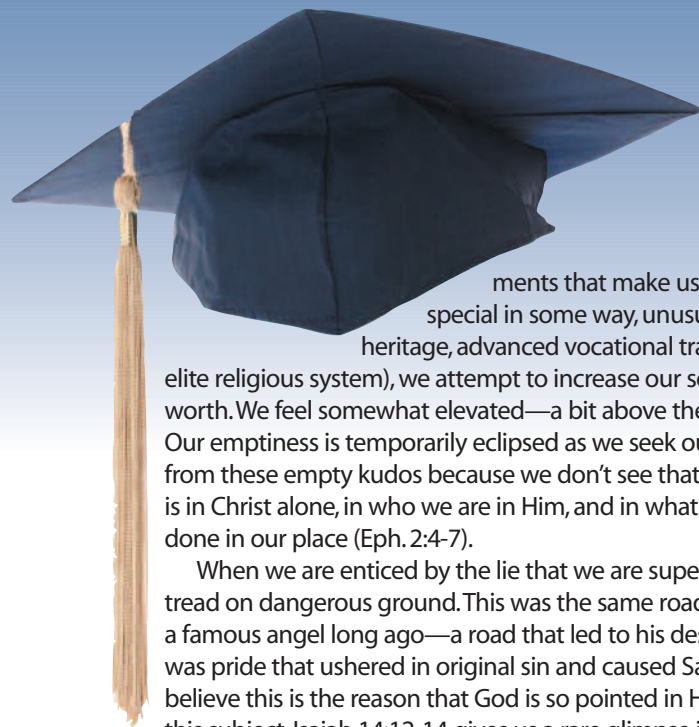
Along with this mantra comes a feeling of entitlement. Our culture embraces this concept and promotes it wholeheartedly within the advertising industry, encouraging consumers to give in to their right to be exempt from “common and average.” Because we’re human, this type of superior thinking permeates the religious arena with much enthusiasm. It’s popular to have a special brand of Christianity based on the unique view each sect holds, often authenticated by a particular “prophet,” “apostle,” or enlightened messenger. These unique characteristics allow members to be special in some way and create a perfect breeding ground for pride.

The definition of pride is “a high or inordinate opinion of one’s own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority; conceit; arrogance.” (*Webster’s College Dictionary*, 2000 edition). The word “opinion” is operative here, for it eliminates objectivity. If pride is subjective, then it holds no authority. The unchanging principles of God’s Word should be the standard by which we operate, not our personal thoughts and feelings (Isaiah 5:20, 21).

Pride can stem from insecurity as well as from beliefs of superiority. When we judge ourselves by human standards, we often fall short and need a façade behind which to hide. Most of us have embellished something to increase our “cool” factor (as in the classic story of a fisherman exaggerating the size of the fish he has caught so that he can impress people). In looking back at times I felt inadequate in some way, those were moments I would grasp for something that would make me stand out, to be noticed. No one wants to feel that they are average—that they blend in. By emphasizing our individuality (for instance, accomplish-



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ments that make us unique or special in some way, unusual ethnic heritage, advanced vocational training or an elite religious system), we attempt to increase our societal worth. We feel somewhat elevated—a bit above the masses. Our emptiness is temporarily eclipsed as we seek our worth from these empty kudos because we don't see that our identity is in Christ alone, in who we are in Him, and in what He has done in our place (Eph. 2:4-7).

When we are enticed by the lie that we are superior, we tread on dangerous ground. This was the same road traveled by a famous angel long ago—a road that led to his destruction. It was pride that ushered in original sin and caused Satan to fall. I believe this is the reason that God is so pointed in His Word on this subject. Isaiah 14:12-14 gives us a rare glimpse into the history of Satan. In verse 14 he states, "I will make myself like the Most High." The consequence: "but you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit." Another peek is given in Ezekiel 28:13-19. While the immediate/local application is to the King of Tyre, it appears to be reaching further back to a fallen angel—the power behind the King of Tyre. "Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom on account of your splendor. So I threw you down to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings." (vs. 17)

Elite revelation

As a child, I remember being told that I was fortunate because I had the real truth. I remember feeling extra special because of this elite revelation our denomination had—those "other people" just didn't get it. Of course God loved them, too, but we were distinctive. We would be tested in the end according to our specific knowledge. This belief is pride, pure and simple. It blinded us to our own hypocrisy. We were so busy focusing on how we were superior (in theology and actions) that we missed the whole point: righteousness is not about the specific action but about the condition of the heart—the motive behind the action. It's like the cart before the horse—if the horse is pulling effectively, the cart will automatically follow. With pride, one's attitude toward God is, "I'm awesome!" With humility, it's "I'm yours!" If we love the Lord and yearn to do His will, our actions will not contradict themselves (Matt. 22:36-40).

When we lack for nothing, we have a false sense of security and self-reliance. Because it appears we're not depending on God for daily needs (as the Israelites did wandering in the desert), we often assume we don't need Him. How many of us feel invincible when things are going well? Our first response is often to utter something like, "What a great job I've done!" It's extremely easy to fall into this category of self-reliance when we have monetary wealth, for it represents power and success. People who are rich in intelligence and talent may fall prey to the same problem (Luke 18:24-27) and find it hard to admit that they cannot save themselves. When things are going well financially, it's all too easy to forget where the blessings originated and to think success is of our own volition. While God gives us

our talents and abilities to use in this world, they may create a barrier to our relationship and dependence on Him if we make them our identity instead of making Him our identity.

The story of Job is especially appropriate. At first glance this story doesn't appear to be an example of God's dealing with pride, but upon closer examination, a story emerges that has significant relevance to the subtle pride we all deal with. We think of Job as righteous rather than prideful. The Bible says he was blameless and upright (Job 1:1, 8). Job doesn't sin by blaming or cursing God, but he eventually falls victim to his own self-pity. In defending himself against his friends (who tell him he is to blame for his misfortunes), he reiterates how "good" and innocent he really is. When the Lord speaks (Chapter 38), His message is, "Who do you think you really are?" Job finally understands, realizing his unworthiness (Job 40:3-5). The central value of the story is not Job but God. Justice and mercy are all about His sovereignty and will, outside of anything we do. When Job officially replies to the Lord (Chapter 42), his eyes are opened to the reality of who he is, and we see his humility. He repents.

The lesson of Job is applicable to every one of us. We feel that if we are "good," we are somehow better. This flawed reasoning only stands if we believe that we earn brownie points for our behavior. The story of Job points out that God is sovereign. Period. We don't earn His favor, and our earthly rewards don't always seem fair. His ways are not our ways—He can see a perspective that we can't. Our job is to have faith (faith expressing itself through love; Gal. 5:6) and trust that He will do what is right for our lives. When we are vulnerable in trusting God completely, the wind is knocked out of pride. I've found that the more exposed I am to God, the closer my relationship becomes. He already knows everything about me, and trying to pretend with Him is futile—it's merely self-deception. Pride is so insidious when we feel we're doing all the right things; we think we're entitled to God's blessings because of our performance. When we add to God's grace, it is no longer grace, but wages (Rom. 4:4, 5). "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23).

The Old Testament is riddled with stories that illustrate the creative ways God dealt with pride. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish when his pride caused him to disobey God and run away from his assigned task (Jonah 1 and 2). King Nebuchadnezzar was stricken with insanity because he failed to acknowledge God's glory and sovereignty over the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:24-37). Belshazzar was slain because of his arrogance and blatant blasphemy toward God (Dan. 5). God rejected Saul because of disobedience and arrogance (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). Obadiah 2-4 reiterates Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Although Obadiah's prophecy was originally intended for the Edomites (the descendants of Esau) for their violence against Israel, the message can be applied to everyone: no matter what power or success we seem to have, in the end, we are not in control. God is. Our agenda is not always part of God's plan. Romans 9:16 states, "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on

In looking back at times I felt inadequate in some way, those were moments I would grasp for something that would make me stand out, to be noticed. No one wants to feel that they are average—that they blend in.

God's mercy."Reality is the big picture from God's perspective and involves how we fit into it—how we can be a part of something much bigger than ourselves, yet be transformed in the process. The purpose of our lives is Christ working in and through us; we need to examine our motives constantly. Are our actions for our own glorification or for the uplifting of God's kingdom?

Philosophical rationalizations

Throughout history, man has made many attempts to eliminate (or change) God and His Word. These philosophies are intellectual rationalizations that inflate man's sense of importance in the universe. They diminish God's role as sole giver and redeemer of life. They serve to quiet man's conscience and increase pride in his own abilities. Listed below are several examples:

Evolution: This worldview does away with God's work of creation altogether. Some would rather believe in evolution (or randomness) than to submit to a higher authority. One may thus remain his own god and creator of his own destiny. There's no need to be accountable to anyone. Romans 1:18-20, however, states, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." In 2 Peter 3:5-7, we see a similar theme: "But they *deliberately* forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (emphasis added).

Liberalism: This philosophy includes denying the inerrancy of God's Word; if there's a chance Scripture is fallible, our responsibility to a sovereign Creator is negated. Disbelieving the Bible's reliability includes downgrading the godly inspiration of biblical prophets. Watering down the efficacy of God's true prophets, however, does not build up the credibility of questionable ones (2 Cor. 11:4-6). By creating doubt in God's Word, we attempt to rationalize our behavior and do what's right in our own eyes. We allow our own skewed thoughts and opinions to become "truth" because we feel they are so, not because they are based on absolute truth. In this way, we don't have to face our own faults and be subservient to the Lord. His presence in our lives makes us see our true selves—who we really are in relationship to Him. (Rom. 3:22-24).

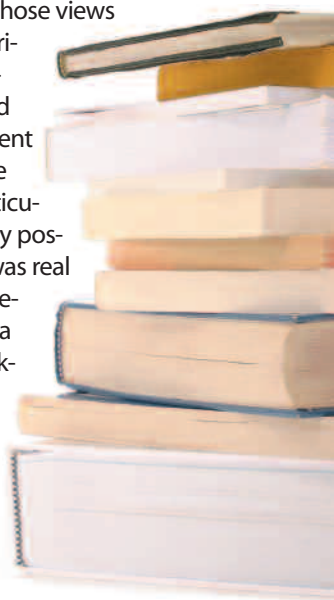
Mysticism: This interpretation of life denies a need for Christ. It claims insight into mysteries transcending ordinary human

knowledge as by direct communication with the divine or by immediate intuition in a state of spiritual ecstasy; of occult character or significance (*Webster's College Dictionary*, 2000 edition). This promise of special knowledge was one of the original lies told to Eve in the Garden of Eden, "...your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:5). It encourages the mysterious and self-absorbed. It's a very attractive route when the ego wants to be stroked, because it's all about me, how spiritual I'm becoming, and reaching the pinnacle of self-enlightenment; spiritual nirvana. This is in direct contradiction to the Word of God regarding how we become righteous and are saved. (John 14:6, 1 John 5:13, Acts 4:12).

Legalism: Our inflated sense of self insults Christ's deity. Instead of admitting that our only escape from death is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, we strive to "do" something to ensure our salvation. What often appears to be obedience is really concealed pride, because it's about elevating our own status based on our performance—a checklist to complete towards perfection. Whether it's dietary restrictions, worshiping on a certain day, or just trying to "do good deeds," the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 illustrates (and foreshadows) that our attempts to cover ourselves are futile (vs. 7). Anything we do for the Lord is to be born out of love for Him, not an attempt to solidify our salvation. It was necessary for God to cover Adam and Eve with skins—the shedding of innocent blood from the first sacrifice (vs. 21).

Hitting bottom

I'll never forget an experience I had while sitting in the mother's room one Sabbath. A few kids were playing in the room while the pastor's sermon was piped in through the speakers—nothing out of the ordinary. As I sat there, I thought about the conversation I might have with my children in the years to come. I tried to envision the explanation I would give them about my denominational views and how those views would translate into their everyday lives. I was terrified by what I felt—there was no peace or consistency in my imagined conversation, only rules and regulations that could be interpreted many different ways depending on the "school of thought," or the particular "brand" of legalism adopted by my particular congregation. While my religion had been fairly positive, it had created more confusion about what was real than it had resolved. I wanted to have clarity in presenting the Lord to my children, but I didn't have a clue as to how to do it. I distinctly remember thinking, "This must be as good as it gets—this relationship with Jesus." It was devastating. The emptiness and loneliness had never been greater. My views contained a conglomeration of a few memorized Bible verses, a lot of Ellen G. White quotes, and some scriptural sections taken out of context to support Mrs. White's theological



For me, the key to abandoning pride is to grasp fully who we are in Christ (righteous) and who we are without Him (condemned). Pride leads to death, because it won't allow one to accept grace.

concepts. These fragments, all interwoven, had become some sort of a theological anomaly with a life of its own. As a small amount of yeast affects the whole batch of dough, many inconsistencies and errors infiltrated the Biblical truths I knew.

It became obvious to me that something was very wrong. While it took some time for me to understand what God was trying to reveal, I knew that this was not the legacy I wanted for my children. Maintaining any kind of pride in what I did (and who I thought I was) was perpetuating a hybrid faith; trying to mesh Old Testament performance with New Testament grace. It's like mixing oil and water; it doesn't happen. The Old Testament points to the New Testament—a superior covenant ushered in by Jesus Christ, making the old covenant obsolete (Heb. 8:6-13). While it's hard to give up control (works) and superiority (elite truth), it's mandatory if one is to accept the complete work and saving grace of our Lord Jesus. Shedding the hollow exterior of Adventism in exchange for a real, unadulterated relationship with Christ has been exhilarating and liberating.

Combined with this diluted theology was an emphasis on performance superiority...looking good on the outside and "doing the right thing." I realized that this concern with performance was like listening to a bad politician for years...always skirting about the issue, and never making any headway with what really matters. The pride it takes to avoid looking solely to the Word of God is huge. I see it as analogous to telling a lie. As time goes on, and the lie begets more lies, it becomes extremely convoluted. It becomes an intellectual pursuit. A person now has to come up with more complicated theories to explain the last ones. Pretty soon she can't even remember what the original story was. In defending her need to be right, she's arrived at a place that is neither peaceful nor truthful. Avoidance doesn't alter reality. How much easier would it be to start with the Bible alone and allow the rest to fall by the wayside—to shed the pride and find Christ alone?

Identity in Christ

For me, the key to abandoning pride is to grasp fully who we are in Christ (righteous) and who we are without Him (condemned). Pride leads to death, because it won't allow one to

accept grace. Christ alone + nothing = grace. There is no place for pride (Rom. 5:15-19). Grace is the death of, and rebuttal to, man's pride (Eph. 2:6-9). Our whole connection with Christ is about relationship, not performance. No "enhancement" of God's Word is valid—it's blasphemy (Rev. 22:18, 19). Any religious system that fosters pride and superiority in its unique

knowledge of "truth" is a dangerous deception; it plays on the carnal desire to be special. Pride reacts with anger when confronted with truth, for there is fear of being wrong. It has to become more important to find truth than to be right, for truth leads to peace and consistency in the knowledge of who our Lord is.

Christ's example was always one of humility. Being lowly was key—He was the great equalizer. From the very beginning, His surroundings were meager and unimpressive by earthly standards. The woman chosen to be His mother was one of humble status, yet she found favor with God (Luke 1:30). Throughout His ministry, Jesus repeatedly made the point that the first will be last, and the last will be first (Matt. 19:30, Matt. 20:16, Mark 9:35, Luke 18:14b). Children were used to symbolize the unpretentious spirit required to inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3, 4; Luke 9:48), for they signify the weak and powerless. Jesus would knowingly shake up the status quo by associating with the dejected and unsavory (Rom. 12:16). Not only did Christ associate with them but reminded His disciples that whoever wants to become great needs to be a servant, and whoever wants to be first must become a slave. In the same vein, He came to be a blessing to others, not to receive blessings. Christ's life was anything but "it's all about me." "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28)

Jesus came to shatter preconceived ideas about greatness—for the way He entered this world, lived His life, and departed (crucified as a common criminal) left little doubt as to the priorities of His kingdom. The riches and status of this world are meaningless, and its currency holds no value (Matt. 6:19-21). As Christians, it's our privilege to model Christ's example. As imperfect humans, this modeling requires moment-by-moment submission to Him. By focusing on those things that are worthy of our attention, the temporary and superficial things of this earth fade in significance. The need to be special, outside of Christ, is no longer important, because the peace we obtain from Him is sufficient.

1 Cor. 1:27-31 states: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.' (Jer. 9:24)"

It's not about me—it's all about being hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3) and letting Him make me an instrument for His glory. ✝



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Old Covenant Law

A look back and a look away

DALE RATZLAFF

In the last issue of *Proclamation!* (July/Aug, 2007), Chris Badenhorst and I presented studies which are the foundation for this article. If you have not read these, please do so before you continue. Find them at: www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

Chris Badenhorst's study, based upon the teachings of the New Testament, showed conclusively that the new covenant Christian is to look to the teaching of Christ and His apostles for ethical guidance or sanctified obedience. This conclusion was based upon both specific statements in the Epistles and examples of ethical teaching therein. He showed that in seeking ethical guidance, Christians are NOT to focus on old covenant law, not even the Decalogue.

My study, also based upon the teachings of the New Testament, concluded that it is the law of love, NOT the letter of the Decalogue, that is written on the heart. It is the Spirit of Christ Jesus that replaces the letter of the law.

These conclusions may be very difficult to accept, especially for some of the new readers of *Proclamation!* There are probably many Bible texts coming to your mind that would cause you to question either of the above conclusions. For this reason I feel it is important to pull together several strands of thought and biblical data.

It is not easy to change one's theological paradigm. However, until we accept the paradigm of the new covenant there will be continual frustration in our walk with God and in our theology. There will be a gnawing sense of guilt that we are not yet good enough, and we will have a hard time trying to fit the many statements of Paul into our belief system.

The old covenant law was not given before the time of Moses.

Sabbatarians base much of their support on the assumption that the Ten Commandments, including Sabbath law, were present during the time between creation and Moses. However, Scripture not only does not support this, it clearly teaches the opposite.¹ Note the following:

"So he [Moses] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."²

"The LORD did NOT make this covenant [the words of which are the Ten Commandments] with our fathers, [Abraham, Isaac and Jacob]³ but with us, with all those of us alive here today."⁴


"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, and to seeds, as referring to many, but rather to one and to your seed, that is, Christ. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise."⁵

"Why the Law then? It was *added* because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made."⁶

These and many other Scriptures teach that the law was given for the first time at Sinai through Moses.⁷ This is the established fact of Scripture.

New covenant Christians are not under old covenant law

Some of our readers may understand the functions of the Ten Commandments are: (1) to define sin;⁸ (2) be the standard of right-



That new covenant Christians are not under old covenant law, including the Ten Commandments, is clearly emphasized over and over again.

eousness for salvation;⁹ and (3) to be the guide for Christian living.¹⁰ Some would agree that we are not justified by law; however, they would also hold that after a person is justified by grace through faith he is then placed back under the law and is on “probation”¹¹ to prove that with God’s help he can follow Christ’s example¹² in obedience. Let us now see what the New Testament teaches.

That new covenant Christians are not under old covenant law, including the Ten Commandments, is clearly emphasized over and over again. I know how hard it is to accept this fact. I fought against it for many years. Finally, however, I decided to line up with the clear teachings of Scripture and let the chips fall where they would. I was amazed when I found out that the Ten Commandments were the very words of the old covenant.

Galatians 3:19 states that the law was added *until* the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Paul goes on to say that the seed is represented by Christ. In other words, the law was added until Christ. This shows the law was not there before it was added, and then after it was added, it was to last only until Christ.

“But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become [or was]¹³ our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:23–25).

“Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God” (Rom. 7:4).

“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” (Romans 7:6).¹⁴

The above statements could be multiplied,¹⁵ and they support the thesis that Christians are not under old covenant law.

The Ten Commandment law is inadequate to define all sin or to serve as a standard of “saving righteousness”

The following verses contain both “law” and “righteousness.” Observe that saving righteousness is not even associated with the law. Rather the two are contrasted.

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”¹⁶

“For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified.”¹⁷

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law” (Rom. 9:30, 31).

“For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to

establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:3, 4).

“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly” (Gal. 2:21).

“You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

“...and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my 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. 3:9).

The above verses indicate that the righteousness of God which is received on the basis of faith is not even associated with the law. Rather, it is a much higher righteousness beyond the righteousness of the law. It is the perfect, imputed righteousness of God.

As new covenant righteousness is far above old covenant righteousness, so the definition of new covenant sin is far above that found in the Ten Commandments.¹⁸ In Matthew 19:17 Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler, “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” Then Jesus listed the commandments on the second table.

The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”¹⁹

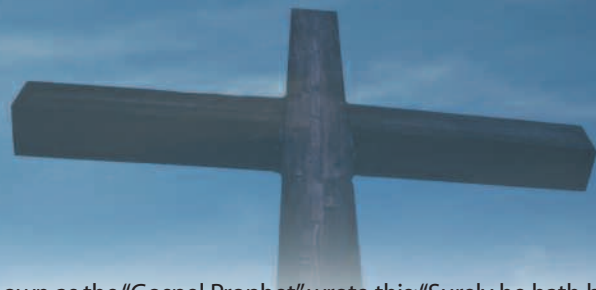
“And Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ And looking upon them Jesus said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”²⁰

From this account we note (1) that the Ten Commandments are inadequate to point out all sin, and (2) obedience to the Ten Commandments produces righteousness that is inadequate for salvation.

The person who achieves “the righteousness of the law” is still lacking. Paul, too, said that as to “the righteousness which is in the Law” he was “found blameless.”²¹ Then he goes on to say that his law-keeping righteousness was only “rubbish” when contrasted to “the righteousness of God” that he received by faith in Christ.²²

In His encounter with the Rich Young Ruler who said that he had faithfully kept the Commandments from his youth, in order help him to see his sin and need of a Savior, Jesus moved away from the Ten Commandments to the two “greatest commandments”—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”²³ If this Rich Young Ruler truly loved his neighbors as himself, he was obligated to help the poor according to his financial ability. Those who say the Ten Commandment law is a “transcript of God’s character” diminish both the definition of sin and the “righteousness of God.”

Speaking of the requirements for salvation, Jesus said, “With men this is impossible.” Who actually has “the righteousness of God”? Who is as perfect as God is perfect?²⁴ Who is as holy as God is holy?²⁵



Achieving “the righteousness of God” is impossible for any man or woman. Both sinners and “obedient law keepers” are on equal footing when confronted with the very “righteousness of God”. Salvation for both groups is humanly impossible. But here is the good news of the gospel! When we place our faith in Christ and His finished work we are saved and counted as if we were perfectly righteous.

The Old Testament has lasting value.

By now some of our readers may conclude that I am saying that the Old Testament Scriptures and the old covenant law are of no value to the new covenant Christian. No, indeed! For Paul says in Romans 3:31: “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

The Old Testament writings were the Scriptures of the early church. Paul says that “they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”²⁶ I believe that the Old Testament continues to have value in many ways. Consider the following:

The Old Testament is a shadow of Christ

Paul, writing to Timothy, his son in the faith, says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”²⁷

This text has sometimes been used to prove that the Old Testament Scriptures, including old covenant law, are adequate in themselves for salvation, thus proving new covenant theology wrong. However, please note the context. (Remember, we ALWAYS study the context.) In 2 Timothy 3:14 Paul shows the main value of the Old Testament is to lead one to faith in Christ: “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings [Old Testament] which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

The value of the old covenant law lies in its function to lead one to Christ. It is not the keeping of old covenant law that brings salvation, but it is faith in Christ. The law is “only a shadow of good things to come.”²⁸ We are not to judge one another regarding food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.²⁹

The Old Testament identifies and describes the Messiah

Another value in the Old Testament is that it identifies the coming Messiah. This is evident in all the Gospels but especially in Matthew.³⁰ Over and over again Matthew gives an incident in the life of Christ and then says, “and this was to fulfill the Scripture...”³¹

Many people have come to faith by reading how Christ fulfilled the many predictions of the Messiah in the Old Testament. It serves as a road map leading one to the destination of Christ.

The Old Testament also gives many helpful descriptions of the Messiah that lead us to a better understanding of His work. Isaiah,

known as the “Gospel Prophet,” wrote this: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”³²

This Old Testament passage was the “bridge” that Phillip used to “Preach Christ” to the Ethiopian eunuch³³ and today it continues to give us insight into the sacrifice of Christ.³⁴

The Old Testament contains illustrations of righteousness by faith.

In the context of Romans, the way Paul established the law was to show from the law—by using the illustrations of Abraham and David—that the Gentiles could be saved without the law. In doing this Paul also gives a specific value of the Old Testament.

In Romans 3 Paul stated clearly that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Then he uses the illustration of Abraham to show that God can justify the ungodly who do not work by their faith.³⁵ To this Paul adds the illustration of David showing that not only does God consider righteous the person who has faith, but He also does not take into account the sin of the person who has been forgiven.^{36,37}

In the remainder of Romans 4, Paul lifts up the “faith of Abraham” as an example of justifying faith. The specific incident he uses is found in Genesis 17:15–22 where God told Abram that he and Sarai were going to have a son and he would be a father of many nations. At this time God also changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah. However, I invite you to read this account. I found that neither Abraham nor Sarah had any faith that they could have a child. Paul, however, shows in Romans 4:20 that even though Abraham had no faith in what he could do, he did have faith in God’s power to fulfill His own promise. Thus Abraham’s faith becomes the pinnacle illustration of justifying faith:


We are to have no faith in our ability to be righteous as Abram had no faith in his ability to have a son. We fully understand the impossibility.

We are only to trust God’s promise and power for righteousness as Abraham trusted only to God’s promise and power to make him a father.

We are to accept our new name (Saint)³⁸ as Abram accepted his new name (Abraham, father of a multitude).

We are never again to see ourselves in our old identity (sinner) as Abraham was never again known by his old name (Abram).

We are to accept God’s word declaring that we are righteous knowing that our only righteousness is in the declaration of God (He accounts us as if we were righteous), just as Abraham accepted that he was a father of many nations when the “many nations,” or even Isaac, were present only in God’s declaration.³⁹



The many promises in the New Testament coupled with the illustrations of faith in the Old Testament work together to build our faith in the providence and provision of God.

Let us note, however, that these insights drawn from the Old Testament are not clearly evident in the reading of the Old Testament passages without the inspired interpretation of the Apostle Paul. Therefore we must ALWAYS go to the New Testament for God's final word.⁴⁰

The Old Testament is an accurate record of "salvation history" and serves as a valuable lesson book

The Old Testament is the record of God's interaction with man from creation to the coming of Christ. In this record there are many important statements of wisdom,⁴¹ illustrations of worship⁴² and incidents helping us better understand salvation history.

John Amandola, pastor of the Lake Pleasant Community Church in Peoria, Arizona, has just completed a series of sermons dealing with the history of the Israelites from the Red Sea to the Jordan River. He brought out many valuable lessons which have application to our lives today. Carolyn and I were personally impacted by these lessons of faith and trust. Many, many times we felt the lessons drawn from these Old Testament stories were intended just for us.

The many stories of faith and failure recorded in the Old Testament are rich with lessons for our lives today. The writer of Hebrews, after showing how Israel failed to enter God's true rest, urges his readers to be diligent to enter God's rest lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. He shows we can enter God's rest "today" and states that we enter "God's rest" the moment we believe.⁴³

From the many stories of faith and failure recorded in the Old Testament we can learn much. We recall the list of the faithful recorded in Hebrews 11 who serve as a "cloud of witnesses surrounding us" who give us courage to "run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith."⁴⁴

There are important moral principles behind many old covenant laws

What follows in no way contradicts the conclusions of Chris Badenhorst. New covenant Christians are to look to Christ and His apostles for instruction on how to live the sanctified life. When I am reading the Old Testament, however, looking for lessons of faith and failure, I have found it useful to try to find the moral principle behind the letter of the various laws. I will illustrate what I mean with two examples.

The manna and the Sabbath in Exodus 16

The context of giving the Sabbath and manna in Exodus 16 is vital to a correct understanding of this incident. God miraculously delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery where they had seen His mighty power in the plagues upon the Egyptians and deliverance through the Red Sea. In order for God to work through Israel in conquering the Promised Land, they would have to learn to trust

Him completely. Therefore God gave them faith test after faith test in order to strengthen their faith in His power to provide for their needs and give deliverance from their enemies.

In the experience of the manna and the Sabbath, God was teaching Israel that He and He alone would provide for their needs if they would be obedient to His word. Those who gathered more manna than instructed realized that it did them no good. When some disobeyed and left some manna over for the next day they found it bred worms and became foul.

On Friday they were instructed to gather twice as much and save it over for the Sabbath day. However, some—probably the same unbelievers who tried to keep it two days, doubting God's provision—went out on the Sabbath and found none. In his sermon about this passage, John Amandola concluded that the eternal moral principle behind the Sabbath law recorded in Exodus 16 is to "obediently rest in God's provision." Is this not the same moral principle Jesus expressed in the Sermon on the Mount?

"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."⁴⁵

We at Life Assurance Ministries are challenged to remember God's provision for Israel and His promises for His people today. God's faithfulness with the manna illustrates Jesus' promise that as we seek the kingdom of heaven our Father will take responsibility for our provision. Our prayer is that we will be faithful to make the gospel front and center and that we will "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."⁴⁶ The many promises in the New Testament coupled with the illustrations of faith in the Old Testament work together to build our faith in the providence and provision of God.

You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing

Here is an interesting example of finding lasting value in an old covenant law. Note carefully how Paul applied this law which is found in a series of what appear to be unrelated civil laws in Deuteronomy 25.

"I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing. God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel."⁴⁷

In the use of this law Paul also draws upon another old covenant law that is associated with the ritual laws of sacrifice—the priests



are entitled to share the meat offered on the altar. Note that he does NOT apply the letter of the law in either case but rather he finds the moral principle behind both these two laws and applies that moral principle: those who proclaim the gospel are to get their living from the gospel. This agrees with the teachings of Jesus, who said, “the laborer is worthy of his wages.”⁴⁸ Paul would even say that pastors and teachers are entitled to a double wage.

“The elders⁴⁹ who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”⁵⁰

Summary of old covenant law: (Some from the articles in the last issue of *Proclamation!*)

The law was not given before the time of Moses. New covenant Christians are not under old covenant law. The Ten Commandment law is inadequate to define all sin or to serve as a standard for saving righteousness and sanctified Christian living. The new covenant Christian is to look to the teaching of Jesus and His apostles for Christian ethics and sanctified living. We have “the law of the Spirit of Christ Jesus,”—the law of love—written on our hearts. The Holy Spirit is an ever present Guide to help us apply the “law of Christ” and follow the ethical teachings of His apostles.

However, the Old Testament continues to have lasting value; it is a shadow of Christ; it identifies and describes the Messiah; it illustrates righteousness by faith; it is an accurate record of salvation history and continues to serve as a valuable lesson book. Behind many old covenant laws are eternal, moral principles. We are NOT, however, to apply the letter of old covenant law. Rather, we are to apply God’s eternal moral principles to our lives as the Holy Spirit reveals them to us in both testaments of His Word, and we are to discover how the New Testament writers applied these principles to new covenant Christians.

I conclude this series on old covenant law by showing the monumental difference it makes in our experience to have a clear understanding of this topic. Living with a “law focus”—and here I include all law, even New Testament law—for salvation (justification) or sanctification (for those who include sanctification as part of the ground for salvation)⁵¹ has only two consequences: either we are always under guilt and condemnation for falling short of God’s ideal, or we deceive ourselves into thinking that we have fully obeyed. Usually when the latter happens we set up arbitrary rules that define accepted obedience.⁵² Then when we feel we have kept the rules well enough, we often become judgmental of others who do not measure up to our understanding of what is required. Most “Formers” can relate to one or both of these outcomes! However, there is a better way!

Look away!

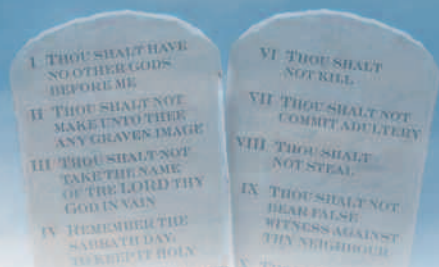
By contrast, however, the new covenant gospel provides a better way.⁵³ We are not under law; we are dead to the law and the law no longer plays any function in our salvation. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”⁵⁴ Rather than look back to the law for sanctified living, as the Galatians did, Christians are to look away from the law and focus their attention on what God has already done for them and what He now declares about them.

The following verses contain so much good news it is hard for those of us who have grown up on law even to comprehend their scope and truthfulness. I encourage you to look them up and underline them in your Bible.⁵⁵ Memorize them and they will become your “sword of the Spirit” to vanquish all the fiery temptations of the devil. When you read them in the following paragraph, do not rush from one statement to the next; rather let the truth of each scripture sink into your soul and spirit. Here is the power of the gospel! Here is the power of the Spirit-filled life! Here is where one finds hilarious joy that is constant in the face of difficulties! Here is the good news that is not only to be received but must be proclaimed. Here is our foundation of faith. Here is the engine that drives Life Assurance Ministries.

The writer of Hebrews says, “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” He admonishes us to “be diligent to enter that rest.” And he says “we who have believed enter that rest”⁵⁶ (Heb. 4:3, 9, 11). Christians who believe enter the “rest” of fellowship with God, the “rest” of Eden’s seventh day when all was very good. We now have eternal life (Jn. 6:47)! We now know we have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13). We now have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). We now have been reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10). Our old self (man) was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6.). We are now to consider ourselves to be dead to sin (Rom. 6:11). We are now freed from sin (Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Jn. 3:8, 9). We are now dead to the law (Rom. 7:4). We now have been released from the law! (Rom. 7:6). We now serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter! (Rom. 7:6). There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus! (Rom. 8:1). We have now received the spirit of adoption! (Rom. 8:15). We now overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us! (Rom. 8:37). We are now sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise! (Eph. 1:13). We are now saved through faith! (Eph. 2:8). We are now the dwelling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:22). We are now chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4). We now have redemption through his blood (Eph. 1:7). God is now at work in us to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). We are now qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). We have now been transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). We now have each received a spiritual gift (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). The Spirit now helps our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26). We have now been predestined to be like Christ (Rom. 8:29). I invite you to read these Scriptures day after day until you really believe what God *now* says about you is *now* true.

Reframe your faith

Too often we speak flippantly about “believing” as if it were something of little consequence. We often rightly interpret faith as “trusting Christ alone for salvation.” However, my goal in concluding this article is to encourage you to expand and reframe your concept of faith not only to include “trusting Christ alone for salvation” but also to include ALL the many things that God now declares to be true about the believing Christian. It was in believing what God had declared about him that made Abraham the father of the multitude of nations resulting in God crediting his faith as righteousness. Likewise, when we believe in what God has declared about us we become “saints in Christ Jesus.”⁵⁷ If we truly believe every biblical statement in the fore-



going paragraph, we will find a new identity. We will discover that we really are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We will find that we now have the very righteousness of God which comes by faith in Christ Jesus because God has declared it so! We turn from the slavery of “do” to the freedom of “done”; from striving to become, to the assurance of God’s declaration.

But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains

unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. 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. 3:14-18). †

Endnotes

1. It is true that there are moral principles in play before the Ten Commandments were given at Mt. Sinai. However, there is no hint of the Sabbath being kept before the time of Moses.
2. Ex. 34:28; See also Ex. 31:18; Deut. 4:13; 9:9, 11, 15; 1 Kg. 8:9, 21.
3. Ex. 3:15, 16; 4:5.
4. Deut. 5:3
5. Gal. 3:16, 17.
6. Gal. 3:19.
7. See also Jn. 1:17; 7:19; Rom. 5:13, 14, 20; 9:14; Gal. 3:17, 19; Heb. 7:11; 9:19;
8. Actually, some of the old covenant laws were given at and after the Exodus before Israel reached Sinai.
9. [the Ten Commandments] point out sin...” Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh Day Adventists, NO. 19, The Law of God.
10. “... These precepts [10 Commandments] are the basis of God’s covenant with his people and the standard in God’s judgment...” *Ibid.*
11. “... They [the Ten Commandments] express God’s love, will and purposes concerning human conduct and relationship and are binding upon all people in every age...” *Ibid.*
12. “... Improve the short, probationary time given you by working with your might to redeem the failures of your past life...” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 530.
13. “Christ lived a life of perfect obedience to God’s law, and in this He set an example for every human being. The life that He lived in this world we are to live through His power and under His instruction.” Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, p. 180.
14. Note that the law “was,” not “is,” our tutor. All of the following translations say “was”: KJV, NKJ, NIV, RWB.
 15. Rom. 7:6.
 16. See Rom. 4:14, 6:14, 15; 7:3; 8:2; 10:4; Eph. 2:15.
 17. Rom. 3:21.
 18. Rom. 4:13–14
 19. See Rom. 3:23; 14:23; Mt. 5:22, 28; Mt. 25:45; Eph. 2:3.
 20. Mt. 19:20

21. Mt. 19:23–25.
22. Phil. 3:6.
23. Phil. 3:8.
24. Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.
25. Mt. 5:48.
26. 1 Pet. 1:16
27. 1 Cor. 10:11.
28. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. Heb. 10:1.
29. Col. 2:15–17.
30. R.C.H. Lenski, *Matthew*, p. 20; D.A. Carson, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, p. 22–25.
31. See Mt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9.
32. Isa. 53:4–7.
33. See Acts 8:25–39.
34. For additional insights on the value of Old Testament law, see Colleen Tinker’s article, “Until Heaven and Earth Disappear,” in July/Aug, 2003, *Proclamation!*
35. “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).
36. See Rom. 4:6–8.
37. This truth completely undermines the SDA doctrine of the Investigative Judgment.
38. “Saint” is the term used to describe true believers who are “in Christ” See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2.
39. For a more in-depth look at this study see *Proclamation!*, Oct/Nov 2000.
40. Heb. 1:1–3.
41. The book of Proverbs, for example, is full of wisdom for us today.
42. The Psalms for example.
43. Heb. 4:11.
44. Heb. 12:1.
45. Mt. 6:31, 32
46. Jude 1:3.
47. 1 Cor. 9:8–14
48. Lk. 10:7.
49. A New Testament term usually used for church leaders who served as pastor and teacher in a local congregation.
50. 1 Tim. 5:17.
51. The historic Adventist position is that both justification and sanctification are required for salvation. And here lies the root on their insecurity

- and unwillingness to say, “I am Saved.” As soon as one includes sanctification (obedient Christian living) into the ground of salvation, one never knows when his obedience is good enough. In the many references to sanctification in the New Testament, however, please note that the biblical use of “sanctification” usually does not mean “progressive obedience” as many define it today. Rather biblical “sanctification” usually means “set apart for God’s use.” Rom. 12:1; 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:11; 7:17; Eph 5:26. Biblical sanctification sometimes means “holiness” but is seen as an outgrowth of saving faith, not as a meritorious thing in the ground of salvation.
52. This is the hallmark of legalism. Take Sabbath keeping for example. Many Sabbatarians believe they are keeping the Sabbath because they measure up to the Sabbath rules that are accepted in their group, church or denomination. If Seventh-day Adventists claim to believe what they say they believe, then they are under obligation to keep all the biblical Sabbath laws, plus those laid down by Ellen White. See *Sabbath in Christ*, pages 74–76 for a list of the biblical rules for Sabbath keeping and pages 388–392 for a partial list of Sabbath rules laid down by Ellen White.
53. The writer of Hebrews shows over and over again how the new covenant is “better” than the old. See Heb. 1:4; 6:9; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:4, 16, 35, 40; 12:24.
54. Rom. 10:4.
55. I have left the references in the text to make it easier to review these in your Bible.
56. In Greek, “believed” is written in such a way that it refers to something that takes place in an instant of time. For a thorough study of this passage, see Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, “The Rest that Remains.”
57. In Paul’s letters to young Christian churches he addresses them as “saints.” Often he frames his statements as “called saints,” thus communicating to them that their standing as saints is in God’s declaration, not in their own holiness. He even called the Corinthians “saints” in spite of their many behavioral and theological problems! See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2.



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

Commendation for Nathanael

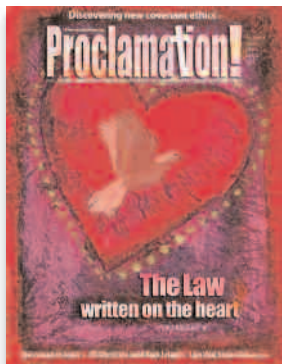
I would like to thank you for your article in the July/August *Proclamation!* I commend you [for] how you were able to express in your brief article one of the many fallacies of Adventist theology and how well and thoughtfully you refuted it. You expressed what many former and even present Adventists think. I commend you for your excellent insight.

REDLANDS, CA

Dismiss Sabbath?

You talk about life assurances, but the one who gives life to all, The Creator—you dismiss His Sabbath? I don't think so!

SAN DIEGO, CA



July/August 2007 issue

Back issues are available at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

Came at the right time

My husband and I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for your ministry and for sending *Proclamation!* It came at just the right time. We received our first issue (unexpectedly) on December 1, just the day after I told my husband that I was ready to take our EGW books off the shelves. As we read your magazine, we found everything to be in line with what we have come to believe. We were absolutely amazed. Receiving your magazine was an answer to prayer and part of God's leading in our

quest for Biblical truth. We began studying our Bibles without the help of EGW or Adventist tradi-

tions about five years ago. We set out to search for truth with honest hearts, opening ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and God did not disappoint us. The veil was lifted from our minds as we discovered the new covenant. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you." God is always true to His word and keeps His promises to us. Receiving your magazine confirmed what we discovered in our Bible studies and validated the decision we made regarding the writings of Ellen White. We read *Proclamation!* from cover to cover each time we receive it. Please keep up the good work, and God bless you with this ministry.

ANGWIN, CA

Follow Jesus' example

I suggest you take the example of Jesus Christ; he ministered to the people and did not go after

Did Ellen White claim to see Enoch on Saturn?

Reader says we tell lies

Your publications would be more factual and truthful if they were not embellished and were completely truthful. It is a fabrication to misquote anybody, much less E.G. White. You are doing the very thing you accuse Mrs. White of doing. The article written by Nathanael Tinker, "On believing or not" (July/August, 2007, *Proclamation!*), Mrs. White did not state, as he claims, that in "A Word to the Little Flock," p. 2 Mrs. White supposedly says "there is human life on Jupiter and Saturn." That quote is a complete fabrication designed to make Mrs. White appear to be a false prophet. She nowhere makes that statement. I have that pamphlet. In trying to bring disrepute on the Adventist church, please refrain from telling lies to do it.

Revelation 12:10 "for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Matthew 7:2 "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Be very careful.

Editor's note: We have been startled at the number of responses we received to Nathanael's small piece, "On believing, or not." We have been repeatedly reminded that Ellen White never said she saw Jupiter, and we are told we are being disingenuous to suggest this idea.

In fact, the episode of EGW's "Topsham Vision" in 1846 has become one of Adventism's prominent in-house arguments endorsing her divine inspiration.

Sarah Truesdail, who was present at the vision, wrote this about it:

"... After counting aloud the moons of Jupiter, and soon after those of Saturn, she gave a beautiful description of the rings of the latter. She then said, 'The inhabitants are a tall, majestic people, so unlike the inhabitants of earth. Sin has never entered here.'" (Taken from Mrs. Truesdail's letter, Jan 27, 1891. The letter was published in J.N. Loughborough's *The Great Second Advent Movement*, pp. 260-261.)

John Loughborough, an Adventist pioneer and the denomination's first historian, published the following about this particular vision:

"One evening, at the conference above mentioned, at the house of Mr. Curtiss and in the presence of Elder Bates, who was yet undecided in regard to these manifestations [Mrs. White's visions], Mrs. White, while in vision, began to talk about the stars, giving a glowing description of rosy-tinted belts which she saw across the surface of some planet, and added, 'I see four

moons.' 'Oh,' said Elder Bates, 'she is viewing Jupiter!' Then having made motions as though traveling through space, she began giving a description of belts and rings in their ever-varying beauty, and said, 'I see seven moons.' [Later edited to 'eight:'] Elder Bates exclaimed, 'She is describing Saturn.' Next she said, 'I see six moons,' and at once began a description of the 'opening heavens,' with its glory, calling it an opening into a region more enlightened" (J.N. Loughborough, *Great Second Advent Movement*, p. 258).

Her husband James, co-founder of the church together with Joseph Bates, subsequently published these words about this vision:

"At our conference in Topsham, Maine, last Nov., Ellen had a vision of the handy works of God. She was guided to the planets Jupiter, Saturn, and I think one more. After she came out of vision, she could give a clear description of their moons, etc. It is well known, that she knew nothing of astronomy, and could not answer one question in relation to the planets, before she had this vision" (*A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 22).

Ellen White's own words about the vision were these:

"...Then I was taken to a world which had seven moons. There I saw good old Enoch, who had been translated" (*Early Writings*, pp. 39-40).

The outcome of this vision was that Joseph Bates believed that Ellen was a true prophet of God, since he knew she had no knowledge of astronomy. This episode has been taught in Adventist schools for years as evidence that Ellen White is a true prophet. While Adventists do not use this event as proof to people outside the church, it is widely taught inside the church, and individual Adventists "know" that Ellen White was shown Jupiter and Saturn, and further, that she saw life there.

The fact that she herself did not name the planets she saw has never negated the belief that she indeed saw them, since Joseph Bates identified them, James White endorsed their identity, and eyewitness Sarah Truesdail confirmed this incident.

Adventists cannot logically argue this episode both ways. They cannot say when responding to critics that she never claimed to have seen Jupiter and Saturn while concurrently using this episode in-house to "prove" that Ellen White was a prophet of God.



the religious institution of His day. When the clerics confronted Him, then He responded. Attacking was not His method, revealing His kingdom and ministering to the people was His method. Your ministry would be profitable if it followed the Master's example.

Please remove the names of my wife and I (sic) from your mailing.

SELAH, WA

Pardoned, not paroled

I want to thank [Dale Ratzlaff] so much for [his] books. I was third-generation on my mom's side and at least fourth-generation Adventist on my dad's. Ended up leaving the church because I figured I was wasting both my and the church's time. I always felt an empty spot in my heart though. [I traveled a lot], and a couple of years ago, I figured that seeing as how I was always just spending my evenings in a motel room, maybe I'd get a Bible and see if I could let God have another chance at me. I bought a New Century translation. I was reading Romans and realized that this was not what I'd been taught in school. I figured that this must be a faulty translation, so I bought an NIV. Different wording but the same message. Oh-Oh. Went and bought a NRSV. Guess what. Bought a NKJV. Now I'm stuck with four "faulty" bibles. Imagine my shock when I read Hebrews 8, 9, and 10.

I've finally found the real Jesus Christ, and it has so changed my life. I've never read the Bible like this before. I can't put this book down. I know that Christ is my salvation and not the "ledger" of my works vs my sins. I know that God doesn't need me to vindicate His character and plans to the rest of the universe. The Bible tells me that I've been pardoned, whereas the Adventist church told me that I'm only on parole.

SPARTANBURG, SC

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

MISSION

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

MOTTO

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

MESSAGE

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

Punishment awaits

...You can rest assured that the punishment that awaits you for leading God's people astray you will have clearly earned. Why can't you see that you are wrong, just as the devil was wrong? Repent and get right with God... Haven't you learned by now if you are unhappy about your experience in the church or with Sister White, just go your way and leave God's people and Sister White alone? ...Have you no conscience or shame? I'm afraid that the devil has so taken over your mind and thoughts that you don't even see or know what the truth really is anymore. You have let him delude you to the point that if truth were to hit you in the face, you would not recognize it anymore. It is too bad that you people have let the devil take over your mind and taught you false teachings. May God have mercy on your soul.

AVON PARK, FL

Beautiful, inspired magazine

Thank you so much for your beautiful, inspired magazine! When it arrives, I read it from cover to cover, then keep it by my chair to reread. As a former SDA, from childhood, and now a joyful Christian in a rich and fulfilling minute-by-minute walk with my loving Saviour, I cannot imagine going back to the isolating cage of deceptive legalism. Thanks for your encouragement!!!

COLTON, CA

Like pornography

Take me off your list. Your stuff is not right, and I am not in agreement with any of it! I am irritated to get a magazine that is to me like pornography. I am sorry you folks are so deceived! My husband and I are so very happy in Adventism and have been all our lives! You have nothing to offer us!

LAPWAI, ID

Cult and son

You are a cult and a son of Belial.

SPOKANE, WA

Labor of love

Just a note to say that I appreciate your labor of love and the incidental blessings that have come to me in [the form of] helps to understand Adventism. I love you and your staff in the Lord for who and what you are, and for what you are doing.

COEUR D'ALENE, ID

Right on track

Your magazine is right on track and such an encouragement! Thank you!

ZEPHYRHILLS, FL

Thank you for your ministry

I have just concluded the reading of [Colleen Tinker and Jeremy Graham's] article, "Discovering the Adventist Jesus" in the May/June issue of *Proclamation!* I found the piece interesting and informative. For me, this is yet another piece of the puzzle regarding Ellen G. White (EGW) that is not very flattering. From



May/June 2007 issue

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her plagiarism of other writers, the "sanctuary doctrine," the predictions of Christ's imminent return, and now to her distorted view of the Trinity, one begins to see a very misguided woman... it's a shame that her teachings and the promotion of her by the Adventist leadership have led millions of sincere, God-seeking people astray...

In Matthew 24:29-31 and Matthew 26:31-33, Jesus describes the focus

of His return in the last days, how could He make these prophecies unless He had known He was victorious at the cross? Would God institute a plan of salvation knowing it would, or possibly could, fail? I think not! Therefore, anyone that believes that Jesus could have failed (sinned) is really deceived by false teachings. All one has to do is read God's Word with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and an open mind (no EGW), and the truth will be seen. *Sola scriptura!*

Thank you for your ministry through the written word; may the Lord continue to guide you in your outreach.

SOCSBERRY, IN

Jesuit plot?

The charismatic movement was a Jesuitical masterpiece. Is this another deception of theirs?? Please remove the enclosed address from your files.

CHERRY VALLEY, CA

God bless

Great articles! Keep up the good work. God bless.

SNOHOMISH, WA

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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Redlands, CA 92373

OR EMAIL EDITOR: proclamation@gmail.com

2006 2007 2008

THIRD ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

For the Glory of God

FEBRUARY 15–17, 2008
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



- Participants include former Adventist pastors Mark Martin, Dale Ratzlaff, Greg Taylor, and others.
- Breakout sessions addressing issues former Adventists must face.
- Worship and prayer time with those who have experienced a journey like yours.
- Food and fellowship time, and sales area featuring books and videos by former Adventists.

SCHEDULE

- Friday, February 15, 2008, 6:00 to 7:00 PM • Arrival and registration
- Meetings and breakout sessions Friday through Saturday evening
- Plan to stay for worship service with Trinity Church (our host church) on Sunday morning and then enjoy a lunch hosted by the Redlands Former Adventist Fellowship.

TO REGISTER (SPACE LIMITED TO THE FIRST 150)

- \$65 per person on or before January 25, 2008 (space is limited to 150, register early)
- Sign up online or make check payable to "Life Assurance Ministries" and mail to: PO Box 905, Redlands, CA 92373
- Fee includes cost of sessions, handouts, three meals on Saturday, and snacks. Scholarships are available!
- You must make your own lodging/transportation arrangements.

TO SIGNUP ONLINE

www.FormerAdventist.com and follow the links to the 2008 weekend.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Phone toll free (877)-349-6984

September/October 2007 **Proclamation!** 23

On Friday, August 17, at 4 o'clock I received a team of three Seventh-day Adventist pastors in my house. According to their leader, the local Adventist church pastor, they had paid me a courtesy call to ask me to reconsider my decision to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to go back. After an hour's discussion in which they fielded questions to me, one of them, a doctor of divinity from Andrews University, held them back with the following remark: "This gentleman has both the logic and the Scriptures in his grasp; and like Paul, his arguments are well-grounded. All we can do is to give him time to see if it is God who called him to his mission." With this remark they ended their brief encounter with me and rushed back to the local church to welcome the Sabbath.

What I wonder is how they are going to try to ascertain that indeed it is God who called me!

A week before this encounter, I had visited an old friend, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who has been living in America for about 6 years until three weeks ago when he came back to Kenya. While he was in the USA, I had informed him that I had left Adventism, so he was eager to meet me for an explanation as to why I left. Because he had been very instrumental in my enrolling in college for ministerial training, I felt I owed him an explanation. Five minutes into our discussion he made the following remark: "Your departure from Adventism is not a new thing. Many have left, but they either become failures in life or they rejoin the church with lots of regrets."

Philemon Aroni and his wife Margaret live in Nyanza, Kenya, with their daughters Esther and Sarah. He enrolled in Bugema Adventist University in Uganda in 2000 to train as a pastor. Following his graduation in 2003, however, he left Adventism because he discovered the problems with the denomination's "distinctive" doctrines and its faulty hermeneutics. Today he directs One Flock Ministries, Kenya, under the leadership of Pastor Greg Taylor.



Adventists question my **FAITH**

PHILEMON OMWEGA ARONI

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANTONIO NUNES

Interestingly, he was not the first one to tell me these things. The strange thing to me is that every Adventist, both clergy and ordinary members, who encounter a person who has left Adventism has the same reaction.

Having been an Adventist myself for more than 27 years, I know very well where their reaction is based: it is based on the Adventist misguided and ill-advised notion of REMNANCY. Adventists are steeped deeply in the belief that they are the only true

church of God on earth. They are made to believe that leaving the Seventh-day Adventist church is equivalent to rebelling against God and forfeiting eternal life altogether. What I don't understand is why even those who hold very big academic titles in Adventism don't seem to be capable of seeing through this theological deception.

For both the team that visited me in my house and my good friend whom I visited in his house, my answer is very simple: the proof of my divine call does not lie in an illustrious, vibrant life or ministry. If it did, I should already be enrolled in the local Adventist church's baptismal class by now because I am simply struggling in both ministry and life. I have no monthly salary, no medical coverage, and no education allowance for my kids or car loan facilities as do my friends in Adventism. But I have what the absence of all the above facilities cannot take away from me: I have the assurance of eternal life and the peace which comes from knowing that God is my Father now, through Jesus Christ, my Savior. This confidence 27 years of Seventh-day Adventism could not give me. The fear I grew up knowing in Adventism of going through the investigative judgment in which I would face an all-knowing God with all my history before me was crippling. But when I met Christ while undergoing training for ministry, 27 years of fear and a crushing burden of history were all lifted from my shoulders, and I was set free. I am now so free and rejoicing daily in the love of God. I cannot exchange my present joy and peace with any of the above delicacies of Seventh-day Adventism. This is where my divine call is based, and it is where it can be proved by any and all doubting Thomases.

†

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