

MINISTRY

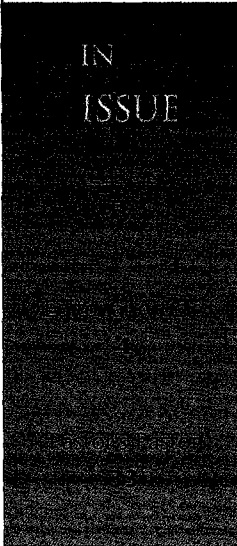
International Journal for Pastors

February 2004



THEOLOGICAL COVENANTS

FROM SHADOW TO SUBSTANCE



- 6

Justly integrating covenant, law, and sabbath
The enduring relationship between the biblical covenant, law, and the seventh-day Sabbath
 Roy Gane
- 12

The covenants: a developmental approach
The ongoing nature of the biblical covenants as the kingdom of God emerges
 Smuts van Rooyen
- 18

Ellen G. White: prophetic voice for the last days
An exposition of the Seventh-day Adventist belief in the "Spirit of Prophecy" and its manifestations in the ministry of Ellen G. White
 Alberto Timm
- 22

Paul, law, and covenants
A comprehensive overview of Paul's understanding of the law in relation to the biblical covenant
 Hans LaRondelle
- 28

The pre-Advent judgment: fact or fiction? (part 2)
The final part of a fresh look at the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment
 Gerhard Pfandl
- 30

Response to Dale Ratzlaff
A statement and letter involving Dale Ratzlaff, who has published materials opposing Adventist positions on the law and the Sabbath
 Alden Thompson
- 34

Preaching with ERIC: four sermon essentials
Four indispensable elements in good preaching
 Patrick Boyle

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INTERESTINGLY, IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE BELIEVERS IN THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS WERE BAPTIZED IN THE BAPTISM OF JESUS AND RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT THE CHURCH BECAME A MISSIONARY CHURCH.

Probably Adly Campos ("Women in Evangelism: The Church's Buried Talent?" October 2003) isn't old enough to remember the great contribution women made to evangelism in the 1930s and 1940s. I remember it well. We probably would never have heard of J. L. Shuler, Fordyce Detamore, or the Venden brothers, had it not been for women Bible instructors who made them successful. Adly Campos quoted: "They can do in families what men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the heart of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed." This is from the chapter in the book *Evangelism* entitled "The Bible Instructor." Usually Bible instructors were much better soul-winners than the pastors. Our women—young and old—need to be given a vision of the great work Bible instructors can do, and our conferences need to provide budgets for hiring them.

—Wayne A. Martin, Inman, South Carolina.

I thoroughly enjoyed Ron Gladden's article "Paradigm Shifts in Evangelism Today" (October 2003). He points out the ineffectiveness of traditional evangelism and our need to go further afield in our evangelistic approaches.

Please urge Ron to write a Part 2 on how to go, on alternate methods. What is working for others now in Athens?

—Ron Wearer, Willamina, Oregon.

Clarity is the supreme politeness" for him who writes, and Dr. William G.

Johnsson demonstrates how those who "wield the pen" should do it in his splendid article "Baptism: Gateway to New Life." He rightfully affirms that "baptism is tied to the person and work of Jesus Christ," that baptism has "confessional significance," that baptism is the "transition to new life as are these biblical meanings of baptism," Johnsson, agrees, none of these meanings applies directly to Jesus. So is there more?

The answer lies in a question that Paul addressed to twelve converts in Ephesus. "What baptism were you given?" he asked (Acts 19:3, NEB). They responded, "John's baptism" (ibid.). The record goes on to distinguish between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism, the former being a baptism of water and the latter a baptism of water and the Spirit. While Brother Bill admits that "Christian baptism goes beyond that of John," he limits the discussion of baptism to the "new life" in Christ and thus neglects to highlight an important distinction: that if Christ's baptism is the prototype of Christian baptism, the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit belong together.

Clearly John's baptism is inadequate as is evident from the experience of Apollo, who "knew only John's baptism" (Acts 18:25, NEB). The real meaning of Jesus' baptism, marked by the descent of the Spirit, was that He thereby received His ordination to the ministry (Matt. 3:13-17; John 1:29-34). His baptism marked the beginning of His Galilean

ministry. Interestingly, it was not until the believers in the church at Ephesus were baptized in the baptism of Jesus and received the Holy Spirit that the church became a missionary church.

What are the implications of this model for the Christian? Through His baptism Christ was initiated into the ministry which led Him to the cross and resurrection. By seeking the baptism of John, Jesus Himself interpreted His baptism as one of identification with sinners, the initiation of redemptive action, and His consecration to His vocation.

Similarly, through the Christian's baptism, Christ incorporates the believer into His body and commissions him for participation in His ministry. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the counterpart of what happened to Jesus at His baptism. The same Spirit who remained in Jesus for Messianic ministry has, ever since Pentecost, dwelt in the church, which is the body of Christ on the earth since the resurrection. Baptism proclaims that as the Christian has been called out of this world, so he returns to the world as its servant. Sadly, for most, baptism does not play this decisive role. Is this devaluation the result of separating the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit?

My conviction is that only the recovery of the full meaning of baptism can save from irrelevance our talk about the ministry of all believers. ■

—Rex Edwards, Griggs University, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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Covenants: From shadow to 3-D

Most of us have had the experience of repeatedly wrestling with the biblical covenant theme and still being left with an itch that recurrently rouses our need to scratch for further clarity and a deeper understanding of this great theme.

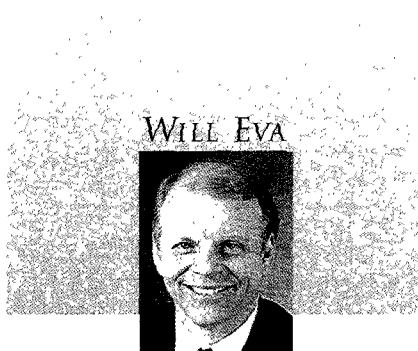
The issue of biblical covenants is important for many reasons, not the least of which is the foundational and pervasive presence of the covenants throughout the Bible and the fact that struggles to understand this theme have pervaded the history of the Christian church from its earliest years.

There still seems to be a significant haze resting on the theological landscape of Adventist covenant theology, and thus upon our personal faith experience in these things.

Near the heart of our Adventist covenant concerns is the supposed threat that some believe covenant theology presents to the identity and reason for existence of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

In the last few years a number of ex-Adventist ministers have raised this issue again, but this time with a more explicit focus on Seventh-day Adventist positions such as the seventh-day Sabbath, that they believe should be jettisoned in the light of the new covenant. While their views of the biblical covenants are animated by theological stances opposed to the Adventist perspective, I believe a similar haziness haunts their outlook, even as it does the views of a critical mass of evangelicals, particularly those with dispensationalist leanings.

The haziness of their approach to the covenant question makes itself evident when to all intents and purposes, and even in the terms of their latest arguments, the seventh-day Sabbath is separated out from the other nine commandments of the Sinai covenant. This presents major difficulties because,



according to the biblical record, the seventh-day Sabbath existed before there was sin, a Hebrew nation, a formalized covenant of any kind, or a formal expression of law, ceremonial or moral.

Their stand is also problematic because, despite the fact that the Moral Law was indeed climactically expressed in Jesus Christ (see below), the Sabbath itself was placed by God's own personal initiative in the heart of the other nine moral principles that seem to get little attention when these issues are discussed in the context of the new covenant. This divine design of the Decalogue and God's act of placing the fourth commandment in the company of the other nine by all means implies the seventh day's constitutional nature.

So if there is haziness in both traditional Adventism, and in the theology of a significant number of evangelicals and other Christians, what is at the heart of the confusion? When it comes to this question, this article attempts to look at the big picture.

Framing the question productively

The center of the question as Seventh-day Adventists have historically grappled with it may simply be worded as follows: "What, if anything, continues or from the old covenant into the new,

or what, if anything, ends with the old, so that it is no longer obligatory under the new?"

Because of the fear of losing the seventh-day Sabbath, and indeed the moral imperatives resident in the Ten Commandments, Seventh-day Adventists have been afraid to admit that anything but the "ceremonial law" ended when Jesus came (some have even had trouble granting the end of the ceremonial system in Christ). This has led some Adventists to rather half-heartedly embrace the magnificent understandings and the enriched experience that were introduced with the coming of the Jesus.

We Adventists must not be afraid of saying that there was an end to something when Jesus came, along with the beginning of something else, and that there was not only that which continued with the coming of the Messiah, but that which was terminated. But again, what continues and what terminates?

As is so often the case, the thrust of the way such a far-reaching question is worded (at least the way in which I have chosen to word it) may not be ultimately helpful and can lead to confusing, labyrinthian answers, and thus to the haziness we have acknowledged when it comes to this question.

The question should rather be posed in terms of the actual descriptions given in the New Testament of what impact the Messianic arrival of Christ had on the covenant arrangements between God and His people.

While the first coming of Christ by all means precipitated serious conflict in the minds of first-century Christian Jews when it came to covenant-related questions like circumcision, feast days, sabbaths, unclean foods, and "sexual immorality" (Acts 15, etc.), the main New Testament concentration was obviously upon the magnificently constituted covenantal terms and relationships

that came into play in Christ under what has come to be known as the new covenant.

As the New Testament writers make their momentous, epochal announcement that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah, they immediately begin to wrestle with the implications of that arrival. As we know, at the heart of those implications is the fact that all that came before the Messianic arrival, through prophets, sacrificial symbols, worship systems, or promises, pointed to the full maturity of the covenant that would come with the arrival of the Messiah. The New Testament declares that in Jesus of Nazareth, this maturity and fullness is now present.

In dealing with this announcement, the book of Hebrews is not only fundamental but is *the* New Testament source dealing with these issues.

Hebrews and the big picture

Hebrews 1:1-4 summarizes the essence of the theme of the book of Hebrews and its discussion of the covenant shift from old to new covenant. It was written in an effort to dissuade some Jewish Christians from returning to aspects of their previous Jewish ways of faith and worship.

At its heart, the theme of Hebrews is encapsulated in the first four verses of the book. Thus it discusses the transition from the incompleteness of how things once were to the maturity of how things now are, since the arrival of Jesus Christ as the expected Messiah. It exposes a crucial move or development from skeleton to living body, from framework to completed structure, from shadow to reality, from silhouette to 3-D, while viewing that which has gone before as critical to the great, overarching, ongoing, monolithic covenantal organism that finds its climactic expression in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-4 also reviews how God spoke "in the past" through prophets, such as Moses, and in "various [other] ways,"¹ such as the sacrificial and sanctuary system and in what we now know as the old covenant, *which would defi-*

nately include the Ten Commandments given on Sinai through Moses. (It is important to thoughtfully review Hebrews 12:18-24 to note this Sinai and thus Moral Law connection.)

With unsurpassable significance, the opening verses of Hebrews announce that in "these last days," in contrast to simply having spoken through prophets and the various other means just enumerated, God has now spoken to us with crowning ultimacy through His Son.

The emphasis in these verses and in the whole book of Hebrews is not so much upon what has been lost from the past, but upon the obvious superiority of what has now been gained through the perfect revelation of God in His Son, Jesus Christ. Indeed, contrary to the imperfection of previous means of communication, the Son is declared to be "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (verse 3). This is clearly not something that could be claimed even for the Ten Commandments, despite the fact that they were written with God's own finger.

The writer of Hebrews goes on to show how inferior are angels, Moses, the high priests of the first system, the blood of bulls and goats, and the whole tabernacle/temple system, including the climactic Day of Atonement. All this is incomplete and monodimensional when compared with what has been ushered in through Jesus Christ; Him to Whom it was all to "lead us" (Gal. 3:24) anyway.

This superiority and newness in Christ includes an infinitely more effective and satisfying access that believers now all have into the very presence of God, by the "new and living way" (Heb. 10:19, 20) opened up for us by Christ into the heavenly sanctuary, versus the once-a-year access only the High Priest had under the first stage of the system (Heb. 10:19-25). The experiential implications of this, which we cannot get into in detail here, are truly magnificent.

All this has been introduced by the vastly superior blood of Jesus which has now been shed, versus the inferior blood of the lambs, bulls, and goats of

the former system. Jesus' blood cleanses the conscience and etches the law on our hearts through the indwelling Christ and through the magnificent ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14-16).

It is critical that Seventh-day Adventists fearlessly face passages such as Hebrews 8:13-9:29, especially passages such as 8:7-13, which for example declares that "If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: 'The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel . . .' By calling this covenant [the one ratified in the blood of Christ] 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear."

It is when we insist that we ourselves come face to face with the clear reading of such seemingly threatening passages, wrestling with them and the related biblical testimony, that the meaning the inspired writer meant to convey begins to emerge in a most rewarding way.

An important, but at first disquieting, concern is to understand that the Moral Law is part and parcel of what was brought to full maturity with the arrival of Jesus (*not* abolished in any way at all; see below). The Sinaitic written expression of the Moral Law is identified as having had, *in and of itself*, a temporary, fading role to play, a role that had to give way to the full and ultimate expression that came with the fullness and perfection of the Messiah Himself (see 2 Cor. 3:7-11).

Antinomianism?

But the Adventist heart reflexively cries out against such a suggestion. Many an Adventist would say, "This sounds like the same old cheap antinomianism we've resisted so forthrightly for so long; a resistance that is at the heart of our reason for existence!"

Neither the book of Hebrews (see 12:22-27) nor such passages as Romans 7:7 and its context, or Galatians 4:21-25 (with their clear allusions to the
continued on page 36

Justly integrating covenant, law, and Sabbath¹

Roy Gane



Roy Gane, Ph.D., is associate professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near-Eastern Languages, Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Many Christians believe that when the Old Covenant of the Old Testament gave way to the New Covenant of the New Testament, Old Covenant law became obsolete² and therefore literal Sabbath observance—as it is actually expressed in the fourth commandment—is no longer relevant.

This approach has been adopted by a broad spectrum of Christians, from those who hold that Christians are not bound to keep any particular day³ to those who slide aspects of the Old Testament Sabbath over to Sunday to make it “Christian.”⁴

What does a balanced look at relevant biblical passages reveal about this often controversial topic?⁵

Waves of grace

Standing back from Scripture and viewing the big picture, one sees that the divine covenants are unified and function as phases of development in God’s overall plan.⁶ Each is a part of a single, unified program of revelation. The enactment or primacy of one does not nullify or subordinate another. None of these covenants replaces the one before it; instead, each supplements what has come before.⁷

In the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31, all of God’s covenant purposes—preservation, promise, and law—climax in Jesus Christ,⁸ who is Priest (Heb. 7-10; like

Phinehas) and King (Rev. 19:11-16; like David).

Thus we see that cumulative phases of God’s unified *everlasting covenant* bring wave upon wave of gracious divine initiative throughout Old Testament times and on into the New Testament, where the comprehensive culmination in the ultimate revelation and only truly effective sacrifice of Jesus Christ washes over the human race in a tidal wave of grace.

Like the new covenant, the Old Testament covenants were based on grace rather than law. For example, only after God delivered Noah and his family did He formalize or ratify a covenant with them, in the process of which He stated some stipulations or laws (Gen. 8:20-9:17).

So the laws were for people who were *already* saved by grace, that is, by God’s own effective intervention (compare Exod. 19:3-6; 20:2). Ever since the Fall, the only way to salvation has been by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) in the *seed* of Eve (Gen. 3:15), that is, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16).

Paul’s distinction between *under law* and *under grace* in Romans 6:14, 15, has to do with states of persons who are *under condemnation by the law* or *freed from condemnation through Christ*.⁹ This distinction is not between two different dispensations.¹⁰ Both of these states could characterize people within the Old Testament or New Testament eras.

Yet, according to Paul, Christ has eclipsed the Mosaic Torah in the sense that He is a more glorious, effective, complete, and adequate revelation of God’s character (2 Cor. 3). Christ did not replace God’s holy, righteous, good, and spiritual law (Rom. 7:12, 14) as a means of salvation from sin because God has never offered salvation on the basis of law.¹¹

Enduring principles

Both within the Bible and elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern covenants and treaties, law operates within the framework of covenant.¹² If we accept God as the authority behind the whole Bible (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:15-17) and recognize that His covenants are cumulative, it’s clear that laws given in connection with the Old Testament covenant phases should in some way inform our conduct.

Some biblical laws, such as the Ten Commandments and many of the *civil laws* (such as Deuteronomy 22:8—protecting people from falling off your flat roof), can be

applied today in a straightforward or fairly straightforward manner, except that church discipline replaces the civil penalties administered under the ancient Israelite judicial system. Many laws are applicable in principle even when the culturally dependent specifics do not apply (e.g. Exod. 21:33, 34).¹³

Some biblical laws we cannot keep if we no longer have the social institutions they regulated, such as levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10). The ritual laws, dependent and centered upon the function of the earthly sanctuary and the temple as the dwelling place of God, no longer apply because that institution is gone.

Since the ascension of Christ, our worship has been focused toward God's sanctuary in heaven (Heb. 8-10). However, we can greatly enrich our comprehension of God's relationship to human beings through study of the Old Testament ritual laws as they relate to the Hebrew sanctuary.¹⁴

Although circumcision was a ritual law (Gen. 17), it pre-dated the sanctuary or temple system and was not dependent on it. So loss of the temple in the first century A.D. does not remove the possibility that circumcision could be an ongoing requirement. Cessation of this requirement is based on another principle: Membership in the "new covenant" phase no longer requires membership in ethnic Israel (Acts 15).

Is there a single criterion that can be used to determine whether a law should or should not be kept today? I propose the following rule of thumb: *A biblical law should be kept to the extent that its principle can be applied unless the New Testament removes the reason for its application.*

Thus I basically agree with Gordon Wenham when he concluded that "the principles underlying the Old Testament are valid and authoritative for the Christian, but the particular applications found in the Old Testament may not be."¹⁵ My approach reverses that of Douglas

Moo, who says "we are bound only to that which is clearly repeated within New Testament teaching."¹⁶

Four aspects of Sabbath

Categories such as moral, health, civil, and ceremonial laws, which imply the extent to which a given law remains applicable, are postbiblical analytical classifications, and a law may fit in more than one of these categories. Nothing in the biblical text explicitly places the Sabbath laws in one category or another, and we must allow for the possibility that they belong to more than one category. In fact, various laws involving Sabbath can be viewed as pertaining to all four:

1. *Moral.* In Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, God commands cessation from work on the seventh-day Sabbath within the context of His Ten Commandments. The other nine commandments are clearly moral in nature, and there is no compelling reason to single out Sabbath rest as essentially ceremonial.¹⁷

With regard to Christians who (unlike himself) believe "that the place of the Sabbath requirement in the Decalogue means that it is to be seen as a binding moral law normative for all people in the same way as the rest of the Decalogue," A. T. Lincoln pointedly remarks:

"Those who argue in this way but apply the fourth commandment to Sunday, the first day of the week, are certainly not as consistent as those groups, such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, who still observe the seventh day; they need to face this inconsistency squarely. On their own presuppositions, by what right do they tamper with an eternally valid moral law? What criterion allows them to isolate the seventh day aspect, which after all is at the heart of the commandment and its rationale (cf. Exod. 20:11), as a temporary feature belonging only to the Mosaic period, while retaining the remainder of the Decalogue as normative for all ages. . . . If the Mosaic law were

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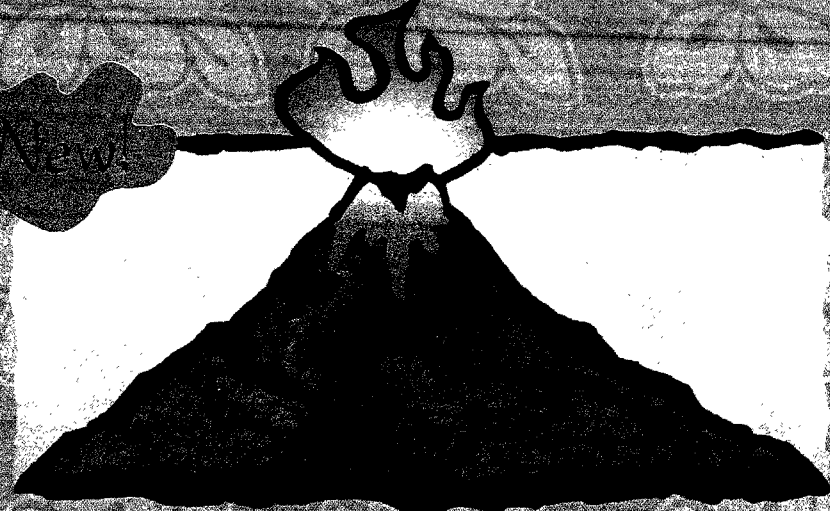
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Jesus brings hope

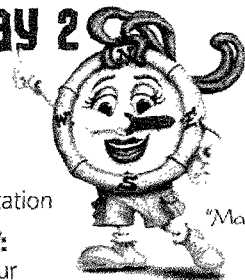
Bible Story:

Jesus is born

Treasure Verse:

"I will put my hope in God"
(Psalm 42:5)

Day 2



Bible Point:

Jesus follows
God's Word

Bible Story:

Jesus resists temptation

Treasure Verse:

"I have hidden your
word in my heart that
I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11)

Day 3



Bible Point:

Jesus gives us courage

Bible Story:

Jesus sends out the 12 disciples.

Treasure Verse:

"For I can do everything with
the help of Christ who gives me
the strength I need" (Philippians
4:13)

Bible Point:

Jesus saves us

Bible Story:

Jesus dies and rises again

Treasure Verse:

"For God so loved
the world that he
gave his only Son, so
that everyone who believes in him will not
perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)

Day 4



Day 5



Bible Point:

Jesus gives us a reason to
celebrate

Bible Story:

Jesus ascends to heaven

Treasure Verse:

"...I am going to prepare a place for you"
(John 14:2)

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designed to teach the principle of one day's rest in seven instead of seventh-day rest, it might be expected that its legislation would have provided for a different day of rest for the priests (cf. Num. 28:9-10), but it does not."¹⁸

2. *Health.* In Exodus 23:12, the benefit of Sabbath rest must include a physical component because it is for animals as well as human beings.

3. *Civil.* Under the Israelite theocracy, a man who flagrantly violated the Sabbath by gathering firewood on this day was stoned to death by the community at God's command (Num. 15:32-36).

4. *Ceremonial.* At the ancient Israelite sanctuary, special rituals performed on the Sabbath quite understandably honored its holiness (Lev. 24:8; Num. 28:9, 10).

We have found that Sabbath is involved with laws belonging to all four categories. The moral and health roles of Sabbath rest are timeless and remain even when civil penalties and ceremonial performances pass away.¹⁹ So it appears that ceasing from work on the seventh-day Sabbath *should be kept to the extent that its principle can be applied.* We will test this provisional conclusion by considering some potential objections.

Objection 1: Seventh-day Sabbath observance was commanded only for literal Israelites.

There is no *explicit* biblical record that the requirement for Sabbath observance was *expressly formulated as a law* before God commanded the Israelites to honor it (Exod. 16; 20). But who says that a divinely mandated duty does not exist until/unless God commands it in the form of a law?²⁰ If this were true, why would God have held Cain accountable for murdering his brother (Gen. 4)?

In the early chapters of Genesis, where Sabbath is first mentioned (see below), God was concerned with setting up the ideal order of relationships rather than commanding protection of existing relationships.

On the seventh day of the Creation week, God by His example, instituted

the refreshing cessation from work for the benefit of all human beings (Gen. 2:2, 3; compare Exod. 31:17).²¹ Jesus confirmed this when He said that the Sabbath was made for humankind (*anthropos*)²² and not humankind for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

The seventh-day Sabbath is the "birthday of the world," which cannot be changed because it celebrates a historical event that occurred at a point of time in the past,²³ long before the nation of Israel existed.²⁴ Thus nothing that human beings do or do not do can affect the holiness of the Sabbath itself.²⁵ Sabbath also signifies dependence upon the One who created and sanctifies people (Exod. 31:13, 17), and who keeps all human beings alive (Dan. 5:23; Job 12:10; Ps. 114:14, 15; 145:15, 16). Because God will always be our Creator and Sustainer, the basic meaning of seventh-day Sabbath rest, which encapsulates this divine-human relationship,²⁶ cannot become obsolete as long as human beings inhabit planet Earth.

"Neither antinomianism nor dispensationalism may remove the obligation of the Christian today to observe the creation ordinance of the Sabbath. The absence of any explicit command concerning Sabbath-observance prior to Moses does not relegate the Sabbath principle to temporary legislation of the law-epoch. . . . God blessed man through the Sabbath by delivering him from slavery to work."²⁷

Objection 2: Literal seventh-day Sabbath observance is no longer relevant because it was a temporary type/symbol of Christian "rest."

Some see support for this approach in Hebrews 4, where Sabbath rest symbolizes a life of gospel rest, involving all days of the week, which results from believing in God.²⁸ However, a historical/horizontal type like the Israelite sacrificial system prefigures something in the future, which constitutes its antitype.

When the antitype commences, the type becomes obsolete.²⁹ In Hebrews 4, God's "rest" has not sud-

denly become available for Christians; it was available all along and was not fully appropriated in Old Testament times only because of unbelief.³⁰ Because it was available *at the same time* the weekly Sabbath was in operation for the Israelites, the weekly Sabbath cannot merely be a historical type of the life of rest.³¹

Colossians 2:16, 17 reads: "Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (NRSV).

In verse 17, "shadow" (*skia*) has been taken to mean "temporary type." So interpreters have commonly supposed that the "sabbaths" mentioned in verse 16 functioned as temporary types.³² However, at issue here is the problem that in spite of Christ's victory and removal of condemnation against sinners through the cross (cf. verses 13-15), some early Christians were prone to judge others (cf. Rom. 14:3) for not engaging in ascetic practices, which involved matters of diet and observance of holy times, in accordance with their philosophy.

Whatever the precise meaning of *sabbaton*, "S/sabbath(s)" in Colossians 2:16, may be, it seems clear that Paul was not addressing straightforward observance of Mosaic Torah, but its misuse within the framework of a misguided philosophy.

At Colossae, however, the sacred days were to be kept for the sake of the "elemental spirits of the universe," those astral powers who directed the course of the stars and regulated the order of the calendar.

So Paul is not condemning the use of sacred days or seasons as such; it is the wrong motive involved he discourages, when the observance of these days is bound up with the recognition of the elemental spirits.³³

Besides, the literal seventh-day Sabbath enjoined in the fourth commandment cannot be a temporary type because God instituted it *before the Fall* (Gen. 2:2, 3). Thus, it was not

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one of the temporary post-lapsarian types/symbols set up to lead human beings to salvation from sin.³⁴

Objection 3: Sabbath is like circumcision (compare Acts 15) in that the New Testament has removed the reason for its application.

To the contrary, the nonceremonial Sabbath principle of rest on the seventh day is not mentioned as abrogated or altered in Acts 15 or anywhere else in the New Testament.³⁵ Moreover, by restoring internalized holiness and obedience through God's Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-28), the New Covenant restores the Sabbath to its true significance.

Sabbath points to a living reality: People who are allowing God to sanctify them honor or keep holy the sanctified day. Because their sanctification means that they emulate the character of holy God, who is love (Lev. 19:2, 18; 1 Thess. 3:12, 13; 1 John 4:8), the fact that Sabbath is a sign of sanctification (compare Exod. 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12) implies that it is a celebration of holy love!

Charles L. Feinberg has argued: "Every moral principle contained in the ten commandments has been reiterated under grace by the Spirit in the form of an exhortation with the single exception . . . of the commandment to keep the Sabbath."³⁶ He missed the fact that the Sabbath is special: It was reiterated in the New Testament not merely by an apostolic exhortation, but by records of Christ's repeated example!

Jesus risked controversy and danger by making a point of healing people on the Sabbath (e.g. Mark 3:1-6; John 5:2-18; 9:1-41),³⁷ thereby giving rest from suffering and showing that the real purpose of the Sabbath was for humankind (Mark 2:27). His recreative healing reveals the heart of the New Covenant³⁸ and agrees with the emphasis on redemption in the motive clause of the Sabbath command in the Deuteronomy version of the Decalogue (Deut. 5:15).

Jesus said that because Sabbath was made for man, "the Son of Man

is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28, NIV). This divine lordship over the Sabbath was part of His claim to be the Messiah.³⁹

Because the Sabbath was made for people and not vice versa, people cannot determine or use it as they please. Thus, in this statement that Christians commonly take today as liberating them from sabbatical law, Christ actually bound His followers to it more definitely.⁴⁰

During His ministry, Jesus showed Christians how to live under the New Covenant.⁴¹ Why would He claim the seventh-day Sabbath as His and reform its observance if He was about to do away with it? That would make as much sense as remodeling a house just before demolishing it!

Conclusion

The New Covenant ratified by Christ's blood culminates God's initiative to restore an intimate relationship with human beings. It fulfills God's long-range plan of grace rather than radically repealing everything that has gone before.

Divine law is for the benefit of parties involved in covenant relationships. The divine command to rest from work on the seventh day of the week embodies a principle that protects the divine-human relationship, as shown by its inclusion in the Ten Commandments. At the same time, Sabbath rest provides an ongoing physical, mental, and spiritual health benefit.

That modern Christians should continue to observe rest on the seventh-day Sabbath as part of their New Covenant experience is supported by three major factors:

1. The Sabbath is universal rather than limited to Israel.
2. The Sabbath is timeless rather than a temporary type/symbol.
3. The "new covenant" confirms and restores the heart of Sabbath and its true observance. ■

- 2 See, e.g., the views of Wayne Strickland and Douglas Moo in Greg Bahnsen; Walter Kaiser; Douglas Moo; Wayne Strickland; and Willem VanGemeren, *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Counterpoints; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 276-279, 343, 375, 376.
- 3 See, e.g., A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (D. A. Carson, ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 400, 403, 404; Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, rev. ed. (Glendale, Ariz.: Life Assurance Ministries, 1995)
- 4 See e.g. Gary G. Cohen, "The Doctrine of the Sabbath in the Old and New Testaments," *Grace Journal* 6 (1965), 13, 14; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Lord's Day," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ed. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 3:159; Pope John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy and Faithful of the Catholic Church on Keeping the Lord's Day Holy," <www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini_en.html>; July 5, 1998
- 5 Cf. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Biblical Analysis of Recent Sabbath/Sunday Developments* (Biblical Perspectives, 14; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1998), 104-120.
- 6 O Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 28; John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 49, 50.
- 7 Walton, 49.
- 8 Robertson, 63.
- 9 Cf. J. H. Gerstner, "Law in the New Testament," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:88 on John 1:17.
- 10 Agamst, e.g., Cohen, 13, 14.
- 11 Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee Among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 91.
- 12 Robertson, 170, 171; Dale Patrick, *Old Testament Law* (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox, 1985), 26.
- 13 Cf. Gerstner, 88.
- 14 See Roy Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Diadem, 1999).
- 15 Gordon Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), 35.
- 16 Moo, 376.
- 17 Cf. Willmore Eva, "Why the Seventh Day?" *Ministry* (July 1999), 6, 7.
- 18 A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day," 355.
- 19 Cf. Frank B. Holbrook, "Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath? Colossians 2:14-17 Revisited," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13 (2002), 65-68, 71, 72.
- 20 Cf. Eva, "Why the Seventh Day?" 5, 6. Against Charles L. Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 95 (1938), 180, 181.
- 21 Cf. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (translated by I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 245, 404; Nahum Sarna, *Exodus* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 202.
- 22 Here *anthropos*, "man" = generic "humankind" (Jon Pauhen, Andrews University, personal communication).
- 23 Herold Weiss, "Sabbatismos in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 58 (1996), 688.
- 24 Cf. Eva, "Why the Seventh Day?" 4, 5.
- 25 John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (2d ed.; International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1930), 35.
- 26 Cf. Cassuto, 244.
- 27 Robertson, 68, 69.
- 28 See, e.g., A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 209-217.
- 29 On the nature and function of biblical typology, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical *τυπολογία* Structures* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1981).
- 30 Cf. Weiss, "Sabbatismos," 683
- 31 For detailed discussion, see Roy Gane, "Sabbath and the New Covenant," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10 (1999), 318-321; cf. E. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 73-75.
- 32 See, e.g., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984), 114-117.
- 33 Peter O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* (Word Biblical Commentary 44, Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1982), 139.
- 34 Cf. Willmore Eva, "Why the Seventh Day?" 5; Holbrook, 64, 65.
- 35 On the Sabbath in the New Testament, see several parts of *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (ed. K. Strand; Washington, D.C. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982); Walter Specht, "The Sabbath in the New Testament," 92-113; Raouil Dederen, "On Esteeming One Day," 333-337; Kenneth Wood, "The 'Sabbath Days' of Colossians 2:16, 17," 338-342; Roy Graham, "A Note on Hebrews 4:4-9," 343-345.
- 36 Feinberg, 187; see also 184-186, 188.
- 37 Jacques Doukhan, "Loving the Sabbath as a Christian: A Seventh-Day Adventist Perspective," *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. T. Eskenazi, D. Harrington and W. Shea; New York: Crossroad, 1991), 152.
- 38 Cf. Willmore Eva, "Why the Seventh Day? Part 2," *Ministry* (September 1999), 7, 8.
- 39 Cf. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day," 363.
- 40 Gerstner, 86.
- 41 See Specht, 105.

1 A much longer version of this article, titled "The Role of God's Moral Law, Including Sabbath, in the New Covenant," is available through <biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org>.

The covenants: a developmental approach

Smuts van Rooyen



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For centuries Protestants have had an ongoing disagreement over the covenants and particularly the concomitant implications for the law. Jonathan Edwards observed, "There is perhaps no part of divinity attended with so much intricacy, and wherein orthodox divines do so much differ as stating the precise agreement and difference between the two dispensations of Moses and Christ."¹ That this is still the case is evident from the survey of scholars and their positions on the law made by Brice L. Martin.² He indicates that scholars who argue that the law is no longer valid for believers include such heavyweights as Albert Schweitzer, H. J. Schoeps, Ernst Kasemann, F. F. Bruce, and Walter Gutbrod.

Scholars taking the opposing view, namely, that the law is still valid for believers, include C. E. B. Cranfield, George E. Howard, Hans Conzelmann, George Eldon Ladd, and Richard Longenecker. This divergence of opinion between such astute scholars gives a schoolboy like me pause, but on this keystone issue a thinking minister cannot avoid an opinion. Here is mine.

What is a covenant and its role?

First, a brief word about what a covenant does. A covenant brings security to a project or relationship by calling on two parties to make a commitment.

As I see it, an unmarried couple living

together does not have the security in their relationship that a married couple has. Sometimes affection falters, and vows must then take over.

That God would have any relationship with us, even a loose one, would be astounding enough. That He would commit to a covenant relationship with us is truly astonishing.

What is a covenant? A covenant is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement between parties for the performance of some specific mutual, interrelated action. In other words it's a compact to start a project and see it through to the end. We'll get this bridge built, we'll form this company, or we'll stay married as long as we live.

A covenant attempts to accomplish something. It is a mutual agreement that makes such an accomplishment likely to succeed. This is important to understand because sometimes the discussion on the covenants in Scripture degenerates into a discussion about stipulations, about commandments, as if they are in and of themselves a covenant. Of course, a covenant does spell out the stipulations to be honored, but they are there to protect the project.

Finally, a sign of some sort, such as shaking hands, circumcision, communion emblems, or a rainbow thrown across the sky, gives outward expression to the inner resolve that the parties have made. The sign says "I'm serious about this thing. You've got a deal."

God's great undertaking

What precisely is the great undertaking God has covenanted with us to accomplish? It is nothing less than the establishment of a kingdom, the creation of a relational place where He can put down roots with His people and we can together be His family.

A simple, on-the-face-of-it reading of the story of Abraham (Gen. 12; 15; 17) confirms this. Abraham is called to leave his home and to venture forth to a foreign land for God, where he is to create a kingdom.

God said to Abram: "This is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations . . . I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an *everlasting covenant* between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of

Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an *everlasting possession* to your descendants after you; I will be their God" (Gen. 17:4-8, NIV, italics supplied).

What a saga! God determines to open a brand new frontier, where Abraham's heart can connect with His and be at rest. True, the technical term "kingdom of God" is not used here or anywhere in the Old Testament, but the idea is patently obvious.

John Bright was right when he said, "It is at once apparent that the idea [of the kingdom] is broader than the term, and we must look for the idea where the term is not present."³

The fabulous kingdom dream of a place of togetherness drives the everlasting covenant in all of its phases. This holds true for the covenant made with Abraham in the adobe settlements of Ur (Gen. 12). It holds true for the old covenant made with Israel beneath the rim rocks of Sinai (Exod. 23:20, 31; 25:8; 33; 34; Deut. 7). It

holds true for the new covenant made with the disciples at the scrubbed table (Matt. 26:27-29; John 14:1-3). It holds true for the twelve tribes of Israel, the redeemed of all ages who stand awestruck as the New Jerusalem floats gently down from heaven (Rev. 21:1-5, 9, 10).

These covenant experiences are nothing less than the unfolding of the developmental stages of the one everlasting covenant made with Abraham.

Changes in the covenant?

Which brings us to the question, What is the paradigm of change used in Scripture to describe the change in the covenant? Is it a revolutionary paradigm of change that overthrows the status quo and establishes a wholly new order? (Remember the American Revolution in which the colonists throw off the yoke of British rule and establish their own government.)

Or is it an evolutionary paradigm of change in which the new emerges

developmentally from the old? (Think here of an egg becoming a larva, the larva a pupa, and finally, the pupa a butterfly.)

The Scriptures teach the kingdom unfolds developmentally, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel (Mark 4:24-29), and the covenant and law keep pace.

Jesus tied the kingdom and the law together (Luke 16:16, 17). Furthermore, the predicted evolutionary change was built in to the very fabric of the covenant made with Abraham (Gal. 3:8). The promised blessing was to evolve, from Abraham's family to a nation, to an international community, and then come to full fruition in heaven, in a city Abraham longed for.

Continuity and discontinuity

At each stage of development the everlasting covenant is reaffirmed, and the process moved forward. At each stage something passes away and something new happens. The

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process involves both continuity and discontinuity, the oak is in the acorn, and the acorn is in the oak, yet the tree is not the acorn.

If the evolutionary or developmental paradigm of covenant change is correct, a number of important observations follow. First, we may not pit a lower stage of development against a higher as if they are inherently antagonistic. The fact is that lower stages produce the higher stages, and pass their dynamic, their DNA on.

We may not therefore pit the Sinaitic covenant made with Moses against either the everlasting covenant made with Abraham, or the new covenant made with the disciples. All of the covenants thrive on promise and grace. Individuals were not saved by grace in Abraham's day and by law in Moses' day. Nor were people saved by grace in Paul's day and by law in Moses' day, as some assert.

That the era of Moses was an era of grace is clear from the following:

1. God did not choose Israel as His treasured possession because of any merit they possessed. He chose them because He loved them and had sworn an oath to their forefathers. God calls the Sinaitic covenant "my covenant of love" (Deut. 7:7-9; 4:32-39).

2. The prologue to the Ten Commandments reminds Israel that the One giving the law is the God who redeemed them by means of the Passover (Exod. 20). Israel was saved by grace before they were given the law (Gal. 3:15-18). Even the stipulations of the covenant were a gracious reminder to Israel of their redemption (Deut. 6:20-25).

3. The relation of the law to grace was depicted by means of the *ark of the covenant*. There the law was placed beneath the golden lid of the mercy seat (Exod. 31:7).

4. It is nothing less than the Passover meal that Jesus transforms into the symbol of the new covenant (Matt. 26:17-30). Grace unfolds into fuller grace as one covenant informs the next; as it comes into maturity.

5. According to Hebrews, Israel did

not enter God's rest because they opted for works and refused to live by faith (Heb. 4:1-11). They were saved by faith as we are, they lived by faith as we do (Heb. 11; Rom. 9:31, 32; Isa. 45:25).

6. Moses is not the antithesis of Jesus. Scripture says Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house and testified to what would come (Heb. 3:1-6). Jesus said, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (John 5:46, 47, NIV).

7. Paul praised the covenant experience of Israel as essential to the story of salvation. It was by means of Israel, he said, that the incarnation of Jesus occurred. He found splendor in Israel's history under the old covenant. "Theirs is the adoption as sons, theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen" (Rom. 9:1-5). Salvation is of the Jews. The Jews not only brought us to Christ (Gal. 3:24) but gave us Christ.

8. The covenant at Sinai was not one of salvation by law; i.e., legalism. God would never design a covenant based on salvation by works. Legalism is always as filthy rags. But Paul labels the Old Covenant glorious. When Moses received the law his face shone with the glory of God (2 Cor. 3:7-11; Exod. 34:29-35). True, the glory faded as that stage of development faded, but it was glory while it lasted. Only *by comparison* to the glory of Jesus is the glory of Moses less impressive. But it was impressive.

9. The lives of scores of Old Testament characters testify to salvation by grace alone. Think of Jacob, David, Mephiboseth, and Gomer, to name a few. Read the sequential procession of the faithful in Hebrews 11.

Problems in developmental process

Developmental processes, how-

ever, are not necessarily free of problems. There is always the real danger of an arrest in development. When an arrest occurs, a normal, earlier developmental stage may sabotage a later stage with drastic consequences. This clearly was the situation in much of the early church when Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians.

What happened was that Jewish Christians attempted to freeze the kingdom within the framework of Judaism and covenantal nomism. They threw up a developmental roadblock that prevented the eschatological era of the Spirit from proceeding. Thus they created an unnatural tension between the era of Moses and the era of the Spirit, between grace and law, between law and Jesus. This tension was created, not inherently there.

Toddling around with outstretched arms to maintain balance is natural in small children but tragic behavior in adults. What form did the Galatian developmental roadblock take? The Jewish Christians insisted that the Gentiles could be justified but only if they first became Jews by submitting to circumcision, dietary restrictions, and observance of the Jewish holy days. The preservation of a national identity is the central issue in the struggles of the Galatians.

A red-hot Paul seeks to crash through this roadblock. It is crucial to understand that Paul is not writing an objective, theological treatise on the relation of law to grace in this epistle. Rather his arguments address an unnatural arrested development. He therefore points out to the Galatians that they have opted out of the eschatological age of the Spirit and regressed back in to the age of covenantal nomism and Jewish nationalism (Gal. 3:1-5).

Then he reminds them that God planned all along for the Gentiles to be part of His unfolding kingdom, for He told Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed through him (3:6-9). Moreover, He warns them that if they insist in remaining where they are, they will remain

under the curse of the law, for Israel had not obeyed God (3:10-14).

Furthermore, the law did not annul or undo the promise made to Abraham, which means that the promise is still present in the covenant made with Moses (3:15-18). The acorn is in the sapling and must be allowed to become a tree.

He argues that the law never was the means to righteousness. If it were possible for the law to have saved humanity, God would have made such a law. God never did so because it was not supposed to be so (3:21).

The era of the law, of covenantal nomism, was intended to lead us to the era of Christ (3:24); it was not to be the end point, so let history progress. Let the promise that is inherent in both Abraham and Moses bring us to Christ.

The status of the Law

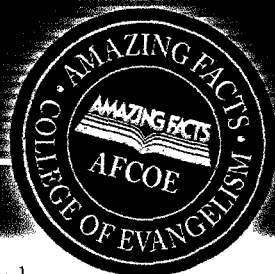
Here we must ask what exactly it is that passes away as the covenant at Sinai progresses into the Christian era? Paul's basic purpose in Galatians is to declare that national Israel no longer stands alone as God's special people. The era of their exclusive identity is over, and the international, multiethnic, Spirit identity replaces it. The blessing of exclusion (Exod. 19:5, 6) has become the blessing of embrace (Gal. 3:26-29).

All who have faith, even Gentiles (what a shocker), are now whole-hearted candidates for covenantal relationship with God. Moreover, the spiritual life of believers is no longer expressed through a gracious system of law but through a relationship with Jesus (5:1-6). The legitimate love of law in the heart of the Israelite (Deut. 6:4-9) no longer animates the spiritual life of the believer (Rom. 7:1-6). Jesus has come, and He is now the animator of his covenantal people!

What about the Ten Commandments?

But if the era of a gracious covenantal nomism is passed, what are the implications for the Ten

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Commandments today? Do they continue to have moral authority?

Yes, they do, for they are specifically adapted to fit the age of the Spirit. In the era of the New Covenant the law is universalized; applied to Christ and the Spirit; stripped of its national, Jewish flavor; summarized as love; and preserved until the kingdom of God is inaugurated. Let us look at these adaptations.

That the law is universalized and denationalized may be seen in the way Paul tailors the fifth commandment (honor your parents) to fit the new situation of a multinational church. In Ephesians 6:1-3, the apostle quotes the command but not accurately. He tweaks one phrase, namely, the promise of longevity.

As restated, the command no longer promises longevity "in the land the Lord is giving you" (Exod. 20:12, NIV), but promises longevity in the earth or the world. The command is universalized to include obedient Gentile children living beyond the borders of Israel. The benefit of longevity is for everyone everywhere.

Thielman has shown us a dramatic example of the law continuing to function in the eschatological age of the Spirit.⁴ He saw it in Paul's injunction to the Thessalonians to break with their past. The boundary markers that were to set these believers apart were a complete break with idolatry, and a turning away from sexual impurity (1 Thess. 1:1-10; 4:1-8).

If they did not obey these commandments, they would do nothing less than reject the Spirit. Paul applied the new covenant prophecy of Ezekiel to their situation. Ezekiel foresaw a time when God's people would be cleansed from impurity (*akatharsia*) and not serve idols when the Spirit would move upon them, when their stony hearts would be exchanged for

hearts of flesh, and they would keep God's decrees (Ezek. 36:24-27).

This prophecy is strikingly similar to the new covenant prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah (Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 59:20, 21). Paul brings Ezekiel to Thessalonica. Clearly the commandments were still morally operative for Gentiles in the New Covenant era.

The commandments are stripped of their national jurisdictional status under the new covenant. This was necessary because in the Old Testament the commandments functioned as laws of governance for a nation, as the law of the land. To disobey them was therefore not only immoral but also illegal. Gross infractions of the law were punished by the death penalty. An incorrigible child, a woman caught in adultery, a Sabbath breaker could all be stoned until dead.

As national Israel passes, the local, jurisdictional, penal aspect of the law also passes. When the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus, while not denying their Mosaic-driven arguments to stone her, He recognized her moral infraction but rejected the death penalty (John 8:3-11).

Furthermore, the New Testament adapts the commandments to the new era by summarizing them into one simple principle, namely, love your neighbor as yourself (Rom. 13:9, 10). The effect of this is to remotivate obedience from obedience as duty to obedience as positive desire. This summary does not abolish the commandments, simply because a summary never destroys what it summarizes. It distills but does not destroy.

Thus the law is preserved. Not one jot or tittle of the law passes away until all is fulfilled (Luke 16:16, 17). When is all fulfilled? Not until the inaugurated kingdom is consummated at the coming of Jesus.⁵

The commandments recast in the image of Jesus

Finally, the New Testament recasts the commandments in the image of Jesus. They lose the thunder of Sinai

and become relational principles that reveal where we are with Christ. Our bodies, for example, are extensions of the body of Christ and therefore are not to be united with prostitutes (1 Cor. 6:12-19). Sexual immorality is thus much more than a legal infraction; it is a sin against our relationship with Jesus.

The Sabbath command also is "Christianized." In the new age, Sabbath rest focuses on entering the heavenly temple with Jesus where we find the throne of grace, and then rest in our Savior's finished work (Heb. 4; 6:16-20). Sabbath rest is "entering in" not merely "refraining from." Jesus has become the center of Christian obedience: He is first, and last, and best in everything, even in—or especially in—the matter of the law.

How shall we then live? Although the law is still morally authoritative and needed, we do not live for the law, but for Jesus. We understand that we cannot keep the law unless we live in the grace of God, are constrained by the love of Jesus, and are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The commandments may function as boundary markers demarcating our separation to God. But boundary markers are only fences. They are not the farm itself; the land is the farm. Jesus is our land. Our souls flourish on and in Him. We grow our wheat on Him. We know it is impossible to grow anything on a fence.

At the deepest level of our being we know that the law is not our glory. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6, NIV). This is our glory. ■

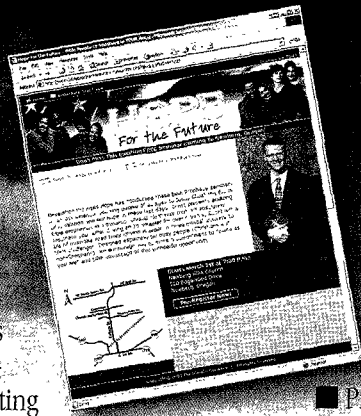
- 1 Cited by W. A. VanGemeren in Greg L. Bahnsen, et. al. *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993), 14.
- 2 Brice L. Martin, *Christ and the Law in Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 21-68.
- 3 John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 18.
- 4 Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1994). See chapter 3.
- 5 G. E. Ladd, *The Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 495-510.

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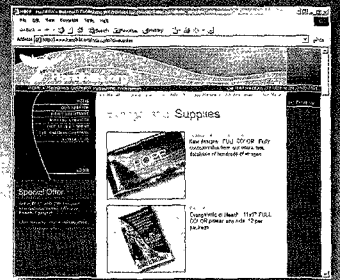
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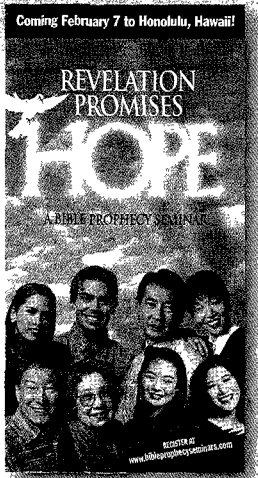
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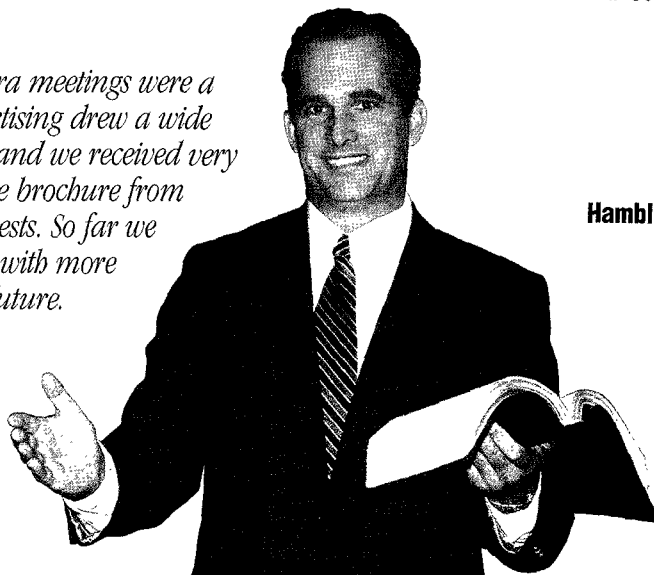
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Ellen G. White: Prophetic voice for the last days

Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Faith #17: *"One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10)."*

Christianity had its roots in the testimony of Old Testament prophets (John 5:39), the teachings of Jesus, and the doctrine of the apostles (Acts 2:42). But after the apostolic era the Christian church lost much of its commitment to the prophetic-apostolic message and began to incorporate the nonbiblical components of the surrounding cultures. The original trust in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5, NKJV) was replaced over time by the acceptance of many lords, many faiths, and several modes of baptisms. Christianity has become so divided in its teachings and fellowship that a recent study has identified 34,000 different "Christian denominations" in the world.¹

Many claim that ecumenical trends will eventually achieve a common liturgical fellowship of all Christians (cf. Acts 2:41-47). But others argue that a mere liturgical fellowship should never be used to replace the actual need of a deeper restoration of Bible teachings of the apostolic Christianity.²

Seventh-day Adventists believe not only that such a biblical restoration has to take place in modern times but also that it actually began around 1844, at the end of the prophetic time period of the 2,300 evenings and mornings of

ALBERTO TIMM



the prophecy of Daniel 8:9-14. The end-time restoration of biblical truth was seen to be fostered by the preaching of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 and by a modern manifestation of the prophetic gift in the life and work of Ellen G. White.

Biblical foundation

Over the years, Seventh-day Adventists have used several biblical arguments in support of prophetic guidance within their own movement. One of those is based on Amos 3:7, which states, "surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (NIV).

Those words are seen as providing an insightful glimpse into God's relationship with this world in some of its most crucial moments. God has provided special prophetic assistance throughout history, especially when major struggles between truth and error have occurred, and when truth needed to be restored.

The Bible is full of examples of this kind of divine intervention. Here are just a few that God initiated for specific, representative reasons:

1. When the world was to be destroyed by the Flood, God called Noah as a prophet and "preacher of righteousness" (Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 2:5);
2. When God intended to liberate the Israelites from Egypt, He chose

Moses as a prophet and leader (Exod. 3-4; Hosea 12:13).

3. When God's people turned away from Him by involving themselves with idolatry, He sent several prophets to warn them (2 Chron. 36:15, 16).

4. When the time had come for Christ to begin His ministry on earth, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of Christ (Matt. 3).

One author suggests that the main characteristics of all four of these crises are showing up simultaneously in the time of the end:

1. As in the days of Noah, the world is ripe for destruction.
2. As in the case of the Exodus from Egypt, God's people will be rescued from an oppressive environment to a better place, even the heavenly Canaan.
3. As in the days of the biblical prophets, the world today is involved with many false systems of worship.
4. As in the days of John the Baptist, Christ is coming soon to His people.³

If in each of those specific crises the truth was restored by the special assistance of the prophetic gift, why should we not expect such an assistance when the final and broadest restoration of truth is taking place as we near the end of time (Dan. 8:9-14; Rev. 14:6-12)?

Seventh-day Adventists have used three additional arguments from the New Testament to uphold their modern prophetic guidance.

The first is the fact that the gift of prophecy is mentioned in all of the major New Testament lists of the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; Eph. 4:11). These gifts have been distributed by the Holy Spirit "for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-14).

This means that, as long as the church does not achieve "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," the need and the possibility for those gifts (including the gift of prophecy) to be given to the Christian community still remains.


Another argument is the biblical warning that believers should not reject any specific manifestation of the gift of prophecy without a convincing reason to do so (1 Thess. 5:19-21). If the genuine gift of prophecy was not to be given after the apostolic age, why would such a warning be necessary? Instead John deliberately warns his readers, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Why should we "try" the prophets if no true prophet was ever to appear after the apostolic age?

A third argument in favor of a modern prophetic guidance is based on those eschatological passages that promise a genuine prophetic manifestation before the second coming of Christ. For instance, Joel 2:28-31 says that "before the great and the terrible day of the Lord" many people would actually "prophesy," "dream dreams," and "see visions." Although this prophecy had a partial fulfillment in the upper room at the first Pentecost after Jesus' crucifixion (Acts 2:16-21), its fulfillment is related also to the same eschatological signs in the sun and moon described in Matthew 24:29-31 and Luke 21:25-28.

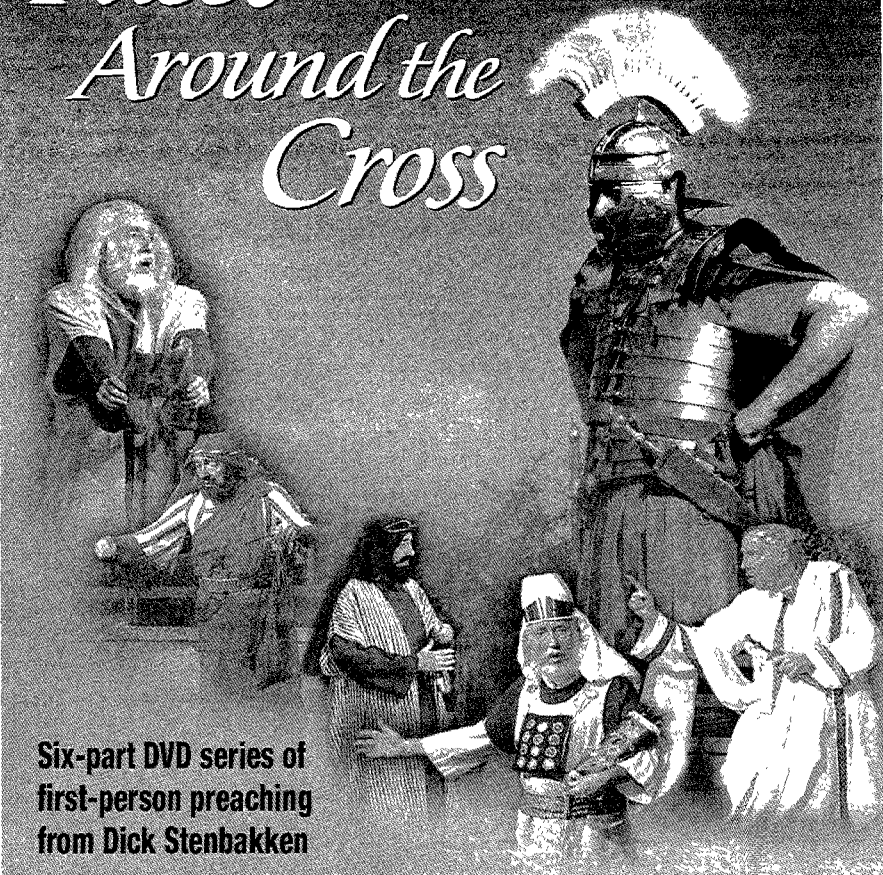
Finally, Revelation 12:17 refers to "the testimony of Jesus Christ" as one of the major characteristics of the end-time remnant church. This testimony, identified in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, has been understood by Seventh-day Adventists as having a plain fulfillment in Ellen White's prophetic ministry.

Contemporary relevance

Some have asked, "Since we have the Bible, why do we need additional revelation in the writings of Ellen White?" If contemporary Christianity manifested itself as a homogeneous



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whole, all its followers interpreting the Bible in much the same way, there would be more reason to doubt the necessity of such an additional revelation. But the fact of the matter is that Christianity has become more divided today in its interpretation of the Bible than ever before.

In this context, T. H. Jemison notes that God provided a new manifestation of the prophetic gift "to serve three basic purposes: (1) to direct attention to the Bible, (2) to aid in understanding the Bible, and (3) to help in applying Bible principles in our lives."⁴

With so many Bibles circulating in the world today, why do we need to have our attention called to that book? Such a need is due to the fact that most of those who possess the Bible do not give to it the attention it deserves.

Today, millions of people are completely absorbed, perhaps obsessed, by a host of other preoccupations, which seem to grow in number and influence with every passing day. In such an absorbing world we need to be reminded constantly of the great themes of the Bible and of our existential priorities (see Matt. 6:33). A new manifestation of the gift of prophecy has been given us to direct our attention back to the Bible.

If the Bible is its own interpreter, why do we need additional "aid in understanding the Bible"? This specific need derives from the fact that Christianity is divided today into many conflicting schools of biblical interpretation, each of them claiming hermeneutical faithfulness to the Scriptures. God gave us a modern manifestation of the gift of prophecy through the writings of Ellen White to help us break away from the human traditions that conspire against the Word of God (see Matt. 15:6-9).

Those writings are a divine prophetic filter that helps us to remove all the human rubble that tradition has artificially imposed on the Bible, so that the divine message of the Scriptures can flow pure and clean into our hearts.

Why do we need a further, special "help in applying Bible principles in our lives"? Because many people today are

willing to accept Christ as Savior but not as Lord. They study God's Word but do not fully obey its message. A modern manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy was given to help us bridge the existential gap between professing religion and living it in practice (see Matt. 5:13-16).

Oswald Chambers has said, "The golden rule for understanding spiritually is not intellect, but obedience. If a man wants scientific knowledge, intellectual curiosity is his guide; but if he wants insight into what Jesus Christ teaches, he can only get it by obedience."⁵

Hermeneutical challenges

There has always been a strong human tendency to reject, or at least to disregard, those prophetic messages that speak directly to one's own problems (see 2 Chron. 36:14-16; Matt. 23:29, 30, 34). Those who do not overcome this tendency might end up developing the unbalanced approach of emphasizing those topics that seem to be more attractive and overlooking those they do not like very much. Seventh-day Adventists have also faced other major hermeneutical challenges in interpreting the writings of Ellen White.⁶

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, some Seventh-day Adventists began to foster a revisionist, historical-critical rereading of Ellen White's prophetic work and writing. Downplaying the evidence of supernatural, divine intervention in the life and work of Mrs. White, her ministry was explained almost exclusively in terms of a natural perspective. The nature of her visions and the content of her messages were accounted for almost exclusively on the basis of historical, psychological, cultural, and ecclesiological phenomena.

Ellen White's visions were perceived just as psychological trances, and the messages that went beyond her common knowledge were considered merely as the result of either plagiarism or her own creative imagination. Consequently, Ellen White's writings were understood as historically conditioned by the "more primitive" cultural milieu in which she lived, without much relevance to our "enlightened" generation.

As a reaction to this, in the 1980s a radical restorationism began to grow within Seventh-day Adventism. Enamored by a narrow view of the spiritual approach of nineteenth-century Adventism, some tended to read the writings of early Adventist authors, assuming that if all their teachings were not explicitly condemned by Ellen White in her own writings, they were fully endorsed by her.

The next step was to look for endorsements of those teachings by means of selective and one-sided rereadings of her writings. Strange as it might sound, this is exactly the hermeneutical rationale some use today to prove, for example, that Ellen White was as much an anti-trinitarian as some of her fellow believers.

In the pre-Internet world, issues related to Ellen White and her prophetic ministry had a limited circulation within Seventh-day Adventism. But since the late 1990s a serious globalization of both criticisms to Ellen White and distorted interpretations of her writings is taking place.

Today, almost all the issues of the past and present are simultaneously available at the homes and offices of all those who have access to the World Wide Web. Such a massive spectrum of criticisms of Ellen White, along with the myriad distorted interpretations of her writings, are targeting the church at a time when many new (and defenseless) converts are joining the denomination without enough knowledge to respond to those challenges.

Understanding the message

In this milieu people easily become preoccupied with the mechanics of Ellen White's inspiration and with the technicalities behind her writings. Useful and necessary as is such knowledge, it is only so to the extent in which it helps to strengthen faith in the broader scope of the biblical message. It is regrettable that some become more concerned with issues related to Mrs. White's writings than with the actual message carried by the same writings.

Those who succeed in moving

beyond the technical level into the broader thematic spectrum of her message will find an extremely rich field for faith-uplifting research. A person can also benefit from previous studies trying to identify the major themes of those writings.⁷

But following are a few more principles that may be helpful when studying the messages found in the writings of Mrs. White.

Those who believe Ellen White was divinely inspired have no difficulty or problem recognizing the overall harmony and inner consistency of her work. Some might feel uneasy about the fact that Mrs. White herself did not systematize each of her major themes. But it is precisely this nonsystematic approach that challenges our thoughts and instigates a research process that can significantly enrich our understanding of the truth that is in her writing.

When we study the work of Ellen White, we can easily see that she refers to several principles or realities as centers⁸ and foundations⁹ of our faith. Such entities are not in contradiction to one another, but they rather complement each other within the whole integrated exposition of truth.

Richard M. Davidson called my attention to the possibility that in Ellen White we have a "concentric concept of truth" similar to the various layers of an onion cut in two parts. Some of the layers can be narrower and some wider, but all of them are closely related to one another in a concentric way. Likewise, the concept of "foundation" in our faith can be seen from a narrower or wider inclusive perspective.

To grasp the richness of Ellen White's message, we have to avoid the temptation of choosing just one of those thematic centers or foundations and assuming, reductively, that such a theme can stand for or in the place of all the others. In studying her work, we have actually to think in the integrative way she did while, for instance, she was exposing her understanding of the plan of salvation within the framework of the great cosmic controversy between God and Satan.¹⁰

Ellen White's message indeed comprises a harmonious constellation of Christ-centered truths. All her writings testify that "Christ, His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth. He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In Him is found the complete system of truth."¹¹

Conclusion

Seventh-day Adventists believe there is enough biblical evidence for a modern non-canonical manifestation of the gift of prophecy. When modern criticism began to undermine the trustworthiness of Scripture, God chose Ellen G. White as a special prophetic voice to uplift the normative authority of His Word. The rationalistic approach of modernism is being replaced by the subjectivistic emphasis of postmodernism, but the interpretation of the Bible continues to be undermined. Perhaps Christianity has never been so close to the point of losing its biblical identity as in our days.

Along with King Jehoshaphat of long ago, today many are asking, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?" (1 Kings 22:7).

Time has come for Seventh-day Adventists to let the world know that there is still a prophetic voice that can

lead us back to the unsullied message of Scripture. After all, our spiritual house will last only if we build it on the immovable Word of God (Isa. 40:8; Matt. 7:24-27). ■

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- 1 David B. Barrett et al, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1 v.
- 2 A helpful historical overview of the restorationist concept in North America is provided in Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence, Protestant Fundamentalism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- 3 Valdecir S. Lima, "Necessitamos de um Profeta Hoje?" *Revista Adventista* (Brazil), December 2000, 8, 9.
- 4 T. Houel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1955), 371.
- 5 Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Westwood, N.J.: Barbour, 1963), 151.
- 6 See Alberto R. Timm, "Issues on Ellen G. White and Her Role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," rev. June 7, 2002 (Lecture originally presented at the General Conference Field Conference in Theology, Greece and Turkey, April 29-May 7, 2002, and at the First International Conference on Ellen G. White and Adventist History, Battle Creek, Mich., May 15-19, 2002).
- 7 See, for instance, George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1996), 109-127; Alberto R. Timm, "Ellen G. White: Side Issues or Central Message," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7 (Autumn 1996): 168-179; Douglass, 256-267; Walter M. Booth, "Ellen White: Theologian?" *Ministry*, October 2000, 5-7.
- 8 Ellen White qualifies as "center" of our message such entities as God (*Testimonies for the Church*, 6:236), Christ (*Counsels to Teachers*, 453), the Word of God (*Signs of the Times*, October 10, 1895, 4), the third angel's message (*Manuscript Releases*, 14:55), the heavenly sanctuary (*The Great Controversy*, 488), God's throne (*Signs of the Times*, August 13, 1902, 2), the atonement of Christ (*Evangelism*, 223), and the cross of Calvary (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 4:1173).
- 9 Ellen White applies the expression "foundation" of our faith, for example, to God (*This Day with God*, 183), Christ (*The Desire of Ages*, 599), God's Word (*Counsels to Teachers*, 374), the prophetic word (*Evangelism*, 196), the heavenly sanctuary (*Manuscript Releases*, 4:248), Christ's atoning work (*The Great Controversy*, 73), and the seventh-day Sabbath (*That I May Know Him*, 357).
- 10 See E. G. White, *Edukanon* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1952), 190.
- 11 White, *Our High Calling* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1961), 16.

Genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God's commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God's creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man. —*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 265, 266

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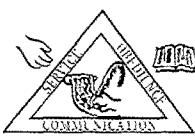
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Paul, law, and covenants

Hans LaRondelle

Editorial note: *This article is a condensed, edited combination of two chapters from Dr. LaRondelle's upcoming book on biblical covenants titled Our Faithful Creator. Watch for information in Ministry and elsewhere as to when and how the book may be obtained.*

The relationship between law and grace is a central concern of Christian theology. Note how John's Gospel distinguishes the two: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (1:17).

Is John placing law and grace in fundamental contrast with God's will? Does the New Testament teach a replacement of Moses by Christ, so that the law is no longer obligatory? Was ancient Israel saved by law, and we by faith in Christ?

The New Testament affirms in Hebrews 11 that God commended saints of old for their *faith* in, and *walk* with God. This affirmation suggests that both Testaments are important for a balanced understanding of God's eternal covenant of redemption.

The terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament" are not used as such by biblical authors. The terms have in fact led to a widespread misunderstanding of the nature of the two Testaments, as though the Old Testament is nothing more than books of the Law with little relevance to Christians in the light of the arrival of the Messiah.

David H. Roper states the problem well: "The crux of this entire issue is a false equation of Old Testament and law," so that the two testaments "stand in almost total discontinuity with each other. Law and grace are seen as antithetical, opposing principles. [For many] the Old Testament is law; the New Testament is grace."¹ This misconception has led numerous people to divide law and grace into two distinct and consecutive *periods* or *dispensations*: for Israel, only law, and for the Christian church, only grace.

Classical Protestant theology, however, defended the understanding that law and grace are parallel themes running from Genesis through Revelation.

This is the perennial problem in church history. Which view represents Paul's position on law and grace in the new covenant?

Paul's theology of law and grace

To Paul the relationship of salvation to the law was of prime concern. His treatment of the law was motivated by his Pharisaic background. He states that he was "a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless" (Phil. 3:5, 6, NIV; Greek: *en nomôi*, "righteousness" "in the law," as in NKJV; emphasis supplied).

Cranfield enlightens us: "The Greek language of Paul's day possessed no word-group corresponding to our 'legalism'," and thus "was seriously hampered in the work of clarifying the Christian position with regard to the law."² As a Pharisee, Paul was seeking a "righteousness of his own that comes from the law" (verse 9). But he sharply contrasts this Pharisaic zeal for the law to his Christian desire to be found in Christ, having "the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (verse 9).

Did Paul blame the law for his efforts to achieve a legalistic righteousness? Or was his Pharisaic tradition guilty of a fundamental *misuse* of the law? This is the critical point!

In Romans 7 Paul states that we have been "released from the law" by "dying to what once bound us," but affirms that the law itself is "holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good, and spiritual" (verses 6, 12, 14, emphasis supplied). Admittedly, Paul does not blame the law for his former bondage to it, but confesses that he himself had to die to the law, not that the law had to die to him (verse 6)!



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He presses the point again: "Did that which is good [the law], then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful" (7:13, emphasis supplied).

Here we have Paul's explicit declaration that the problem is not with the law itself, but with his sinful nature that does not know itself in the light of God, and therefore needs to be awakened to its sinfulness by a confrontation with the law of God, thus being held accountable to God (see Rom. 3:19).

Paul defines the spiritual purpose of the law: "Through the law we become conscious of sin" (Rom. 3:20). God's law thus reveals that our transgression of it produces *guilt* before God. That, for Paul, is a God-ordained function of the law, so that we may realize our need of God's grace through Christ. Paul develops this theme again in Romans 5 (see verses 20, 21).

It is very important to note that Paul's main focus is on the Ten Commandments, for he quotes the tenth commandment in Romans 7:7, and several others in 13:9. To use the moral law, however, as a thermometer of our own law keeping before God is a serious *misuse* of the law, because it rejects the need for God's grace for our justification. Rejection of God's grace is just as much a sin as rejection of His law!

Law as Torah

Paul also uses the term "law" in the broader sense of the Torah of Moses, as in Romans 3:21, where he speaks of the "Law and the Prophets." Paul considers the law of Moses in its entirety as a preparation for the gospel of God's redeeming grace: "Christ is the end [goal] of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4).

Badenas, in his doctoral dissertation on Romans 10:4, concludes that

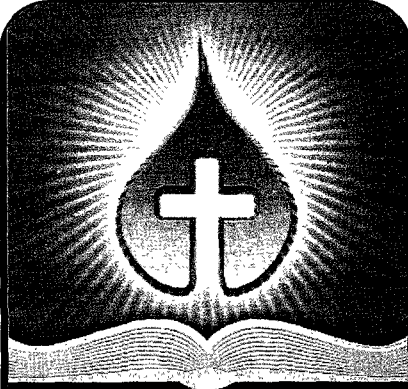
Paul used *nomos* ["law"] in Romans 10:4 "in the sense of Torah as it stands for Scripture: the Old Testament, not as something 'old' which has been abrogated by Christ but rather as the living word of God . . . ever true to itself . . . and, therefore, ever valid and new."³

Paul saw the Old Testament as witnessing to Christ, so that "Christ is the fulfillment and climax of God's revelation to mankind,"⁴ Paul's faith in Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy meant for him that Christ became the key for a new hermeneutic. He read the Torah in the light of Christ! He could no longer view the law as an end in itself but as a means that leads to Christ. "Paul's veneration for the Torah was surpassed by his veneration for Christ. This surpassing of Torah by Christ is what Paul wished to teach Israel and this is what Israel did not accept."⁵ This is vital to our understanding of the movement from the "old" to the "new" in the development of God's relationship with His people.

Romans 10:4 is one of the fundamental theses of Paul's theology concerning the relation of Christ and the law.⁶ Paul was convinced that Israel had misunderstood the law of Moses, because it "did not submit to God's righteousness" (10:3). He therefore appealed to Moses' Deuteronomy to prove that from the start, the God-ordained purpose of the Torah was the "righteousness that is by faith": "'the word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming" (Rom. 10:8, cf. Deut. 30:14).

Thus Paul gives the Torah-freighted heart of Deuteronomy 30 a Christ-centered content, by filling the "mouth" with the confession that "Jesus is Lord [*Kyrios*]," and the "heart" with the belief that "God raised him from the dead."

Paul then moves on in Romans 10:9, 10, to apply Moses' words to the gospel truth that the Christ-believer is now being saved through justification by faith in Jesus.



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The proper place of law in relation to grace

Paul is convinced that salvation cannot come from observing the law. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16, KJV; see also 3:10, 21). Paul's theology of law and grace is well expressed in Galatians 2:21: "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing."

Paul is making an absolute contrast here. Is it the contrast of law and grace? Or is it the irreconcilable antithesis of *righteousness* through the law and *righteousness* through God's grace? Paul does not state that grace has set aside the law, but rather that it has set aside the prevailing tradition of "righteousness [coming] through the law."

Paul's theology placed two different *ways of salvation* in contrast to each other: *salvation* through the law and *salvation* through grace! He explains: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4, emphasis supplied). The issue is clearly about the *misuse* of the law in Judaism, about employing it as the way to obtain salvation, as Paul himself believed when he was within Pharisaic Judaism (see Phil. 3:6-9).

On the basis of justification by grace through faith in Christ, Paul proceeds to mention the fruits of justification, such as peace with God, joy in the new access to God, hope in sharing the glory of God, and the experience of God's Spirit of love in the heart of the believer (see Rom. 5:1, 2, 5).

Further, Paul writes to the justified believers that their love for God and their neighbor fulfills the law, because "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10, emphasis supplied). And again: "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law" (Gal. 5:18, emphasis supplied).

From this some have concluded that love replaced the law, but Paul

does not say that. He says that love fulfills the law, and "the entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14, emphasis supplied). To the apostle, love does not make God's law superfluous, but rather love is the divine intention of the law, just as Jesus had explained in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:43-48).

Not under the law

Paul's statement in Romans 6:14 ("For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace") deserves special attention because it is frequently misinterpreted in popular evangelical literature. The word "for" indicates that Paul draws a conclusion from his previous statement, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its evil desires" (6:12).

Paul makes this exhortation on the basis of the believer's transforming experience signified by "baptism into Christ Jesus" (6:1-7). Romans 6 answers the ever challenging question, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" (6:1).

Romans 6 deals with the role of the law in our sanctified life! Paul begins by contrasting the reign of law over against the reign of grace. Many have taken the statement—"you are not under law but under grace"—to mean an abolishing of the authority of the law over the Christian believer.

But look at the context. Paul's antithesis of being "under law" or of being "under grace" indicates two contrasting positions: to be under the power of *condemnation* for those who are outside of Christ, or to be under the reign of *justification* for those in Christ.

Thus, if context—not preconceived doctrinal consideration—is taken as our interpretative guide, any problem one might see in Romans 6:14 simply disappears. To be "under grace" means to be under the reign of Christ to live a life in "righteousness," as Paul states in 5:21. To be "under law" means clearly the opposite of

being "under grace," namely, to be under the dominion of sin in our life.

Note the apostle's parallel statements in Romans and Galatians:

"For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law" (Gal. 5:18, emphasis supplied).

Comparing both, we see that to be "under grace" is synonymous with to be "led by the Spirit." Being led by the Spirit implies a *Spirit-led obedience* to the Redeemer.

Paul urges the believers to realize that they have *changed* "lordships" in their conversion experience. They are no longer "slaves to sin" but committed "slaves to obedience, which leads to righteousness" (Rom. 6:6, 15-18).

To be "in Christ" means to be "under Christ's law" (1 Cor. 9:21), which is equivalent to the "keeping of God's commandments" (1 Cor. 7:19), so that "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

This is the genuine new-covenant experience through Christ's ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Paul and the Old Covenant

Two passages of Paul—Galatians 4:21-31 and 2 Corinthians 3—seem to denounce the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of works, and therefore in radical contrast with the new covenant of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Each passage must be understood in its own literary and historical context.

The Galatian passage: The conflict in the Galatian church was not between Jews and Christians, but was an intra-Christian dispute between two kinds of early Christian missions to the Gentiles. The apostle does not direct his critique against the synagogue, but against "the false brethren" who had "disturbed" the Galatian churches (Gal. 1:7; 2:4).

The exact identity of these "false

brethren" is unknown. E. G. White describes them as "the emissaries of Judaism," who "induced . . . [the Galatian believers] to return to the observance of the ceremonial law as essential to salvation."⁷

Paul's burden for the Gentile Christians was to deliver them from the false teaching that they should observe the Mosaic ritual law *in order to* gain acceptance with God and receive His Spirit. The intruding Jewish Christian missionaries apparently taught that circumcision was still required in order to enter into the Abrahamic covenant, and that *every person* must live a life under the Torah to become a legitimate child and heir of Abraham.

To these men, the law was still the necessary tool to become victorious over one's sin and to inherit the blessing of the Spirit promised to Abraham.

Paul's contention with these rival missionaries was not primarily their ceremonial observances but their theology of salvation: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace!" (Gal. 5:4). And further, Paul objected to their claim that observance of the law will result in the Spirit manifestations among the Gentiles (Gal. 3:2, 5). J. Louis Martyn comments: "They [the competing teachers in Galatia] necessarily view God's Christ in the light of God's Law, rather than the Law in the light of Christ, and this meant that Christ is secondary to the Law."⁸ This secondary place of Christ was the reason that their message, according to Longenecker, was "one of both legalism for full salvation and nomism for Christian living."⁹

Paul warns His converts that "to be under the law" (3:1) is in fact turning to a "different gospel," one that "perverted the gospel of Christ" (1:6-9). For Paul, the expression "to be under law" meant to be in a state of confinement and slavery or bondage (3:23; 4:25) from which one needs to be liberated (4:5; 5:18). He challenges the Galatians to learn from the Torah

a lesson that may correct their law orientation and nomistic lifestyle, and to follow again Christ and His interpretation of the Torah. He asks them, "Do you not hear the law?" (4:21, NKJV). Paul uses the term "law" here for all the Scriptures of Moses and the Prophets. He tries to show the proper use of the Torah, by interpreting some passages from Moses about the true Israel. Paul begins with the story of Abraham and his wife Sarah and slave girl Hagar, focusing on the birth of their sons (Gen. 16-21), "one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman" (4:21, 22).

Paul turns to the different way each son was born: one was born "*according to the flesh*" (NRSV), the other was born "*through the promise*" (4:23). The two mothers are representations of "two covenants." This conclusion is introduced by the apostle himself, because Genesis 16-21 do not refer to a Hagar covenant or a Sinai covenant! This fact should alert us that Paul is working out his interpretation from present developments in Galatia back to the Genesis story. Paul shows that there has developed within the apostolic church a misuse of the Mosaic covenant, the turning of the Sinai

covenant into a covenant of rituals to achieve salvation, a distortion that amounts to enslavement to ceremonial observances of the Mosaic law. Such a self-made covenant misrepresents the Abrahamic covenant, because the Sinaitic covenant is none other than a renewal of God's covenant with Abraham. The "Hagar" covenant is therefore an illegitimate covenant (of works) before God. Paul calls this falsification of the Mosaic covenant the "Hagar" relationship, stating: "One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are slaves: This is Hagar," who "corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children" (4:24, 25).

Paul designates the *Sinai* covenant here as bringing Israel into *slavery*, which was of course a travesty of God's purpose with Israel. It is clearly a fundamental error to elevate the counterfeit of the Mosaic covenant into a legitimate dispensation of God's plan of salvation. Moses had earnestly warned Israel against seeking their righteousness by works of law (see Deut. 9:4, 6). And Hebrews 11 testifies to the fact that the saints of the Mosaic covenant experienced righteousness by faith in the promise, just as Abram



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had received it (Gen. 15:6).

Paul apparently takes the Mosaic covenant as it was used by his opponents, legalistically and without regard to Christ, for his polemical purpose. He refutes his opponents by distinguishing the law from the promise, as he had done earlier in Galatians 3:17, 21. Calvin accurately describes Paul's use of the Sinai law in Galatians 4 as "the bare law in a narrow sense."¹⁰ Cranfield explains: "This 'bare law' (*nuda lex*) understood 'in a narrow sense' is not the law in the fulness and wholeness of its true character, but *the law as seen apart from Christ*."¹¹

The Corinthian passage. Some have argued that Paul announces in 2 Corinthians 3 a covenant that would completely replace God's covenant with Israel, with the implication that even the Ten Commandments and the seventh-day Sabbath stand abandoned. But consider the historical context of the passage.

The Corinthian church members were confused by the agitations of some intruding Jewish-Christian missionaries from Jerusalem. They were Judaizers similar to the ones who caused problems in Galatia. These missionaries accused Paul of lacking apostolic authority and preaching a gospel of his own making.

It seems that many in the church at Corinth were losing confidence in Paul as a true apostle. Consequently, Paul takes issue with the false accusers in chapters 10–12. The issues are not only the adequacy of Paul's apostleship, but also the truthfulness of Paul's gospel message (2:17–4:6). Paul illustrates the superiority of the new covenant of Christ by an ever-sharpening contrast with the Jewish ministry of the Mosaic covenant. He contrasts his ministry of the Spirit with the Jewish effort to attain salvation through law-obedience. The main theme of 2 Corinthians 3:1 to 4:6 is therefore not a full-fledged doctrine of the covenants, but Paul's defense of his apostolic authority. However, Paul does compare the old

and the new covenant *ministries*, in order to illustrate the superior effectiveness of his apostolic ministry.

The apostle claims that "through Christ" he has the empowerment and the competency to be one of the "ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). He then compares his gospel ministry with that of the "old" covenant that "brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone" and only possessed a "fading" glory on Moses' face (3:7, 8). The question rises, *Why* did Paul describe the Mosaic covenant ministry as "the ministry that brought death" although it came with a glorious splendor, too bright for Israel to behold, while his "ministry of the Spirit" is much more glorious because it "brings righteousness" (verses 7-9)? Paul deals here with the Mosaic covenant in its administration "of the letter" *without the life-giving Spirit!* So what Paul is dealing with is the Pharisaic reduction of the Mosaic covenant to a mere "letter" service of the law. In sharp contrast with this legalistic performance, Paul views the gospel as one that has the "surpassing glory" of Christ and of His Spirit (verse 10), in order to bring forth in the Christian the fruit of "righteousness" (verses 9, 15-17).

Paul insists that the law *as such* does not provide life or righteousness but rather condemns each transgressor to death (Rom. 3:21, 23; 6:23). He explains both the goodness and the death-bringing function of the Decalogue as follows: "I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life, actually brought death" (Rom. 7:10). The condemning function of the law for sinners is necessary to reveal the indispensability of God's continuing grace and guidance. But the Decalogue can never give that grace to sinners! The new covenant, however, brings the forgiving grace of God and the life-giving Spirit who writes the law of God on the human heart and

empowers us to obey God's will from a willing heart. All spiritual Israelites have enjoyed such a new-covenant experience, as their testimonies in Psalms 1, 19, 40, 51, and 119 affirm.

Paul calls his ministry a *ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness*. It brings freedom from the condemnation of the law (Rom. 8:1, 33, 34), and prompts to a sanctified life in true discipleship of Christ (see Rom. 6:12-21; 7:6; 8:4, 14-17). Such a walk with God is the greater glory of the new covenant age, and is valid for all eternity! Paul used the term *old covenant* to underline the outdated character of the Mosaic dispensation as it was administered in his day with its Christless law orientation.

Paul claims that he has received the "more glorious ministry" of the Spirit that effectively "gives life" and "brings righteousness"! (2 Cor. 3:6, 9). Through the Spirit we receive "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). This new revelation of God's glory in Christ can be perceived only by a faith relationship with Christ, by turning to Christ Himself (2 Cor. 3:14). Paul was not arguing against Moses or the Mosaic covenant but against the "false apostles" who were "reading the old covenant" with "the same veil" over their hearts as Moses had put over his radiant face when the Israelites "were afraid to come to him" (Exod. 34:30). Paul wrote that the "veil" that prevented their understanding of the old covenant was "even to this day" a veil that "covers their hearts" (2 Cor. 3:15). He therefore urged: "But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2 Cor. 3:16). Christ alone gives the spiritual understanding of the old covenant.

To understand the conflict situation in Corinth, we need to see that Paul was opposing Christian Judaizers, who remained law-oriented more than Christ-oriented. His opponents still cherished their old-covenant observances, to which Christ was secondary. Or, to say it more specifically, His

opponents were taking the law of God *by itself*, disconnected from Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. For them the law remained only chiseled on tablets of stone in the earthly tabernacle.

The new standard of Christlikeness

Paul develops his theme even more dramatically by dwelling on the event of Moses' unbearable radiance that radiated from his face, after he had been talking "face to face" with God on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights (Exod. 33, 34).

Moses asked God to show him His divine "glory" (Exod. 33:18). God agreed to show Moses His essential character of compassion, grace, and mercy (verse 19), but said: "You cannot see my face: for no one shall see me and live" (verse 20). God placed Moses in a cleft of the rock and gave him a newly written copy of the Ten Commandments as a transcript of His

character (Exod. 34:28). Paul applied Exodus 34:29-35 to his blinded opponents. The reason why Moses was asked to put a veil on his face was Israel's *conscious guilt and sense of divine displeasure* after their worship of the golden calf. Had they been obedient to God, the heavenly glory on Moses' face "would have filled them with joy. There is fear in guilt."¹²

Theologically speaking, a *veiled law* is a law divorced from the Lawgiver! But the glory of the gospel surpasses the glory of the Sinaitic covenant, because the gospel does not veil the glory of God but increases its transforming effect in the believer. The reason is that the Christian believer approaches the immediate presence of God.

Beholding day by day the glory of God in Christ, the believer is "changed" from glory to glory. In this transformation the Christian surpasses the fading glory of Moses. The Christian is called to grow more and

more *Christlike!* After all, the goal of justification is sanctification—"until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). This transforming process silently changes the soul after the "new standard" of Christ. "The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ."¹³ ■

- 1 David H. Roper, *New Covenant in the Old Testament* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1976), 11, 12.
- 2 C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC, Edinburgh: Clark, 1979), 2:853.
- 3 Robert Badenas, *Christ: The End of the Law* (JSNT, Suppl. Series 10, University of Sheffield, England, 1985), 149.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 149.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 151.
- 6 Cranfield, 515-520, 848.
- 7 Ellen G. White, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 6:1108.
- 8 J. Louis Martyn, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1985) 38:316.
- 9 Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 41, 1990), xcvi.
- 10 John Calvin, *Institutes* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, LCC 20, 1967), II:7, 2.
- 11 Cranfield, 859.
- 12 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1913), 330.
- 13 ———, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1913), 98, 99.

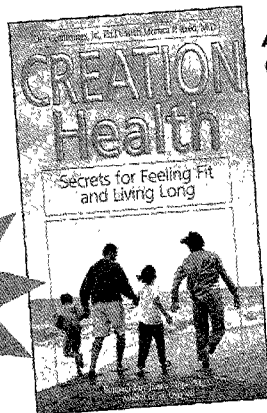
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The pre-Advent judgment: fact or fiction? (part 2)

Gerhard Pfandl

Editorial Note: The first in this two-part series appeared in the December 2003 issue of Ministry.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the judgment in Daniel 7 is a pre-Advent, investigative judgment. Is this concept scriptural or an unbiblical Adventist fiction?

The investigative judgment concept throughout Scripture

Right from the beginning of God's dealing with fallen humanity in Genesis 3, a pattern of judicial procedure emerges. First comes the investigation: "Where are you?" "Who told you?" "Have you eaten of the tree?" (Gen. 3:9-13). Following this investigation God announces the verdict in verses 14-19. We find a similar divine approach in God's dealings with Cain (Gen. 4:9, 12) and in His handling of the Sodom and Gomorrah incident. It is significant that the New Testament projects the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah as an "example," or a "type," of God's judgment at the end (2 Pet. 2:6 and Jude 7). Most of Genesis 18 and 19 describes God's investigations and deliberations before a punitive action on His part.

In the writings of Israel's prophets, Israel or the nations are arrayed before God's judgment seat. An investigation is made, facts are stated, witnesses are called upon, and finally a verdict is pronounced (e.g., Isa. 5:1-7; 43:8-13,

22-28). The sequence is always the same: sin, investigation, and judgment.¹

The concept of a pre-Advent, investigative judgment appears also in the New Testament. The parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22 is a prime example. "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment" (Matt. 22:11, NKJV). The king's inspection of the guests represents a process of investigation. The result of this investigation determined who of the guests could remain and who could not. In this sense it is a picture of the investigative, pre-Advent judgment in heaven going on now.

Other New Testament texts that presuppose a pre-Advent judgment are John 5:28, 29, where John mentions a resurrection for life and a resurrection for condemnation, and Revelation 20:4-6. Most biblical exegetes agree that Revelation 20 teaches two literal resurrections of the dead, separated by one thousand years. Inasmuch as only the "blessed and holy" come up in the first resurrection, a prior judgment must have taken place to determine who will take part in the first resurrection.

The Lutheran theologian Joseph A. Seiss recognized this and wrote, "The resurrection, and the changes which pass in the twinkling of an eye upon the living, are themselves the fruits and embodiments of antecedent judgment. They are the consequences of adjudications then already made. Strictly speaking, men are neither raised nor translated, in order to come to judgment. Resurrections and translations are products of judgment previously passed upon the dead as dead, and upon the quick as quick. The dead in Christ shall rise first, because they are already adjudged to be in Christ, and the living saints are caught up together with them to the clouds, because they are already adjudged to be saints, and worthy to attain that world."²

In Revelation 14, the harvest of the earth is preceded by the first angel's message, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). The sequence of events portrayed in this chapter clearly indicate that the judgment spoken of in 14:7 precedes the execution of the judgment at Christ's second advent described in verses 14-20.³

Thus throughout Scripture we find the concept of an investigative judgment before the Second Advent.



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The judgment in Daniel 7

Daniel 7 consists essentially of a vision, its interpretation, and the prophet's reaction to the vision. It is framed by a prologue (verses 1, 2a) and an epilogue (verse 28). The vision (verses 2-14) depicts four beasts, with the focus on the fourth beast, which has ten horns out of which arises another little horn. This little horn becomes the main opposition to the "Most High" and the saints in the rest of the chapter.

While the activities of the little horn continue here on earth, Daniel's attention is drawn to a heavenly judgment scene (verses 9-14) in which the little horn is condemned, the saints are vindicated, and dominion, glory, and a kingdom are given to "one like the Son of Man."⁴

The judgment passage in Daniel 7:9-14 contains three scenes: (1) a judgment in heaven in verses 9 and 10; (2) the end of the fourth beast, i.e., the outcome of the judgment in verses 11 and 12; and (3) the reception of the kingdom by a Son of Man (Christ) in verses 13 and 14.

It is important to recognize that this judgment is going on while the little horn is active on the earth. At the end of verse 8, Daniel hears the "pompous words" of the little horn. Then his attention is diverted to the heavenly judgment scene (verses 9, 10). But after describing the judgment scene, Daniel's attention is again arrested by the great words which the horn spoke. The text says "at that time," that is, while he was beholding the heavenly assize, this speaking—with great words—took place here on earth.

Having dealt with the little horn and the beasts, whose dominions had been taken away while their lives were prolonged here on earth (verses 11, 12), the vision returns to the heavenly realm and the ultimate triumph of God's plan (verses 13, 14).

The time of the judgment

Three passages in Daniel 7 refer specifically to the judgment. These

are found in verses 9, 14, 21, 22, and 26. Because the actions of the little horn clearly intersect and, for a time at least, coincide with the heavenly judgment, this judgment cannot be the final judgment of Revelation 20. Rather it must be a preliminary judgment going on in heaven before the Second Advent, as Seventh-day Adventists have always believed.

This has been recognized by a number of non-Adventist commentators: The Roman Catholic author F. Düsterwald, for example, wrote, "Without question, the prophet Daniel here describes God's judgment concerning the hostile powers. The judgment ends with the total condemnation of the world empires and the triumph of the cause of God. However, what is described here is not as many older interpreters (Theodoret and others) have assumed the general judgment of the world, it is not God's judgment here on earth, rather the place of the judgment is in heaven. The context indicates, that it is a preliminary judgment which is later confirmed in the general judgment of the world."⁵

The Protestant interpreter T. Robinson saw this judgment sitting during the nineteenth century when he wrote his commentary on Daniel. He said, "As already observed, this is not the general judgment at the termination of Christ's reign on earth, or, as the phrase is commonly understood, the end of the world. It appears rather to be an invisible judgment carried on within the veil and revealed by its effects and the execution of its sentence. As occasioned by the 'great words' of the Little Horn and followed by the taking away of his dominion, it might seem to have already sat. As, however, the sentence is not yet by any means fully executed, it may be sitting now."⁶

Who is being judged?

In this judgment scene books are opened and studied (verse 10). In the Old Testament we find references to the "book of the living" (e.g., Ps.

69:28), the "book of remembrance" (e.g., Mal. 3:16), and to God's "book" (e.g., Exod. 32:32; Ps. 56:8). The same thought occurs in the literature of later Judaism and in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Enoch 47:3; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12; 21:27). The important question is, who is being judged from the records in these books? From the context we conclude that this judgment includes:

1. *God's people.* Because "a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:22, NKJV), they must be in some way the subject of this judgment. This fact is not recognized outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, though this should not surprise us. Because most Christians believe in the immortality of the soul, they believe that a person's future state is decided the moment when he or she dies.

A pre-Advent judgment, therefore, in which a final decision is rendered as to whether a person is saved or not, does not make sense to them. They see the dead already in heaven or hell (or purgatory for Roman Catholics).

2. *The little horn.* The context of the judgment scene repeatedly refers to the little horn (verses 8, 11). The judgment, therefore, must somehow also involve the little horn. "Internal contextual evidence suggests that the saints and the little horn share equally in the pre-Advent judgment verdict"—the saints in the sense that they receive the kingdom (verse 27) and the little horn in that dominion is taken away from it. Thus the vindication of the saints (verse 22) implies the condemnation of the little horn.

The purpose of the pre-Advent judgment

The primary purpose for the investigative pre-Advent judgment is the final confirmation of salvation and vindication of God's people (7:22). "From time to time some of these saints have been adjudged guilty of various crimes by earthly tribunals when actually they were serving God
continued on page 38

Response to Dale Ratzlaff

Alden Thompson



Alden Thompson, Ph.D., is professor of biblical studies at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Since shortly after the middle of the twentieth century, Seventh-day Adventists have been in sporadic and sometimes painful dialogue with the Evangelical community. Influenced by the Fundamentalist movement, many Evangelicals still hold to the doctrine of biblical “inerrancy,” though differing widely in their definitions. With notable exceptions, Evangelicals have been predestinarian in their theology, standing in the Calvinist tradition, thus emphasizing divine sovereignty and other evangelical tenets such as justification, grace, and the security of the believer. Besides this, there are many Evangelicals who are dispensationalist in their outlook, claiming a discontinuity between the old and the new covenants.

By contrast, Adventists stand closer to the Arminian/Wesleyan tradition, with a strong emphasis on human freedom and responsibility, sanctification and obedience. Evangelicals have taken issue with Adventism over our sanctuary doctrine and our use of Ellen White as an extrabiblical authority. And they have chided us for our unhealthy tendencies toward legalism and perfectionism.

For all the differences, however, Adventists and Evangelicals still hold much in common, sharing key elements of “conservative” Christianity: the divinity of Christ, His incarnation and bodily resurrection, the atonement, and the Advent hope itself. Some of

what has tended to keep Adventists separate have been issues related to the seventh-day Sabbath, eschatology, lifestyle, and the use of Ellen White’s writings.

As a result of extensive dialogue in the 1950s between leading Evangelicals and key Adventist leaders, Adventists published *Questions on Doctrine* (1957), seeking, among other things, to demonstrate to the larger Christian world on biblical grounds that we are indeed part of Christianity proper and not a cultic deviation.¹ In response, Walter Martin, speaking for many Evangelicals, published *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism* (1960), in which he admitted (somewhat reluctantly) that Adventists really are brothers and sisters in Christ. In reality, some Adventists were very unhappy with what they considered regrettable “concessions” in *Questions on Doctrine*, just as some Evangelicals today remain unconvinced that Adventists are truly Christian.

In the early 1980s, crucial issues in this long-standing debate within Adventism surfaced again in conjunction with the challenges presented by Adventist theologian Desmond Ford. While reflecting many evangelical impulses, including a strong emphasis on justification, Ford himself has remained committed to the seventh-day Sabbath. Others, however, have gone further, separating themselves from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and adopting a “new covenant” theology that excludes the Sabbath command on the grounds that it is ritual, not moral, and finds its terminus in the Person of Jesus. They do this while still advocating a high moral standard, a “righteousness beyond the law.”

Adventists would agree whole-heartedly that the New Testament (for example, Jesus’ comparisons between the old and the new in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5) teaches a morality far exceeding the basic Sinai commands. The crucial question, of course, is whether the Sabbath is included in Jesus’ moral vision or is set aside as ritual.

In 1989, responding to these and other issues, a former Adventist pastor, Dale Ratzlaff, published *Sabbath in Crisis*, now reissued in a revised edition as *Sabbath in Christ* (2003). In 1996 he published *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*.² In 1998, six former Adventist pastors³ collaborated in a video entitled *Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind the Church*.⁴ Strongly implying

that Adventism really is a cult after all, the video especially criticizes the ministry of Ellen White and the cluster of doctrines that grew out of the 1844 disappointment experience. Perhaps most surprising is that some former Adventist pastors were willing to identify themselves, perhaps unintentionally in some instances, with a video that criticizes Adventists for rejecting the doctrine of an eternally burning hell.

When I saw the video, I was troubled by what I considered to be its misleading representation of Adventism. So I asked Dave Thomas, pastor of the College Place Seventh-day Adventist Church (now Dean of the School of Theology at Walla Walla College), if he would collaborate on a response to the video. The result was an hour-long video dialogue.⁵

The letter that follows is a revision of one that I sent to Dale Ratzlaff in April 2001 and further revised after he responded to it. The letter was triggered by a telephone conversation with him when I called his 800 number to order several books and copies of the original video. Our conversation at that time was informative, candid, and cordial. I promised to send him a letter addressing several of the issues we had discussed by phone.

In subsequent contacts Ratzlaff has made it clear that he does not identify with all the positions represented in the video *Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind the Church*. In particular, he would take a more nuanced approach to traditional evangelical positions on divine sovereignty and predestination, a position that includes an element of free will.

As for hell, Ratzlaff is ambivalent. In an email to me, he says that he does not want to be seen as a “promoter” of the doctrine and argues that the true nature of “hell” or “eternal destruction” is “beyond human understanding.” Furthermore, he believes that an effective, saving proclamation of the gospel can be made without the threat of hellfire.

As far as Sabbath is concerned,

Sabbath in Christ succinctly states Ratzlaff’s opinion that the old covenant meant “physical rest,” and the new offers the “rest of grace.”⁶ The Sabbath, as a command to keep holy the seventh day of each week, simply does not apply to Christians because it is ritual, not moral. Commenting on the Sabbath miracle at Bethesda (John 5), he says: “Christ considered the Sabbath to be a ritual law that pointed forward to the rest He would bring and now it had little, if any, value.”⁷

In our conversations, Ratzlaff has repeatedly expressed his amazement at my deep appreciation for the writings and ministry of Ellen White. He pointedly states that his relationship with God improved significantly when he quit reading Ellen White.

My own experience with Ellen White has been quite different. By helping me make peace with diversity and change, the two features of Scripture that are often so troublesome for devout conservatives, Ellen White has played a crucial role in nurturing in my soul an enduring faith in God and in Scripture as God’s Word.

So, with reference to Sabbath, to Adventism as a community, and to the writings of Ellen White, Ratzlaff and I differ significantly. It is a great sadness for me that any conscientious believer would feel the need to leave Adventism, and Ratzlaff is clear that he left for reasons of conscience. Ironically, I know that I must stay, also for reasons of conscience.

So what happens when we conscientiously disagree? For my part, I find it helpful to remember Ellen White’s counsel, originally given to A. T. Jones, to “treat every man as honest” (6T, 122). That simply echoes the teaching of Jesus: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12, NRSV).

Here then is my recently edited letter to Dale Ratzlaff:

Letter: Thompson to Ratzlaff

April 23, 2001

Dear Dale: I appreciated the oppor-

tunity to talk with you by phone. I suspect we could have lengthened the conversation considerably. My own “Arminian-Wesleyan” experience would differ from yours in several ways, I suspect. But I have become increasingly concerned that the Adventist emphasis on human freedom and responsibility makes it more difficult for us to give proper recognition to divine sovereignty and grace. That’s part of the reason why your writings and the video are of such high interest to me.

As I see it, however, the Evangelical/Reformed tradition finds it more difficult to make peace with the critical issues which our increasingly secular age presses upon us. One of my doctoral mentors, for example, became an Evangelical Christian in his teen years, but lost his faith when continuing studies undermined his “inerrancy” view of Scripture.

What struck me about the video was that virtually every criticism leveled against Ellen White and Adventism can be paralleled with similar critical attacks against Scripture and Christianity: there is at least as much to question in Scripture from a “scientific” point of view as there is in the work of Mrs. White. Scripture certainly contains (conditional) predictions which did not come to pass; and the “great disappointment” with its aftermath shows striking parallels with that earlier “great disappointment” which nearly crushed Jesus’ disciples.

When, at my request, my earlier-mentioned believer-turned-atheist mentor read and critiqued the manuscript of my book, *Who’s Afraid of the Old Testament God?* two of his comments struck me with particular force:

1. “As you would expect, the overall argument of the book does not convince me, though at a certain stage of my intellectual and spiritual development I can see that it would have considerably alleviated my doubts.”

2. “If I ever return to faith it will be as a Jew and not as a Christian.”

I could also add to the list of quotes his personal comment to me in conversation: "If I had maintained my devotional life, I never would have lost my faith."

Speaking specifically to your interest in the "two covenants," I would want to point out that the "new" covenant promise appears first in Jeremiah, a promise to the people of Jeremiah's day. In other words, it was an "Old Testament" experience as well as a "New Testament" one. In that same connection, when Jesus says in Matthew 5 that he came to "fulfill" the law, the context indicates that he did not set the law aside, but made it even more rigorous, more demanding.

Thus I would take quite a different approach than the one found in your chapter 14 in *Sabbath in Crisis* (219-234, 2nd edition).⁸ At root, however, I surmise three key issues to be paramount in the experience of those who leave Adventism for an evangelical community:

1. *Assurance.* Paul (most forcefully in Romans and Galatians) finds assurance through a courtroom emphasis with Jesus as the all-sufficient sacrifice and advocate on our behalf. That perspective comes clearest in the Reformed and Evangelical communities. But the other New Testament road to assurance, perhaps more typical of Wesleyan communities, uses a family emphasis or model.

It is nurtured by the Gospel and Epistles of John and is best illustrated by Jesus' story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. In that parable one finds grace and acceptance, to be sure; but instead of an accent on the price paid at the divine initiative, the parable highlights the human decision to return home to a loving and accepting Father. Some in Adventism have often gotten the worst of both worlds, suggesting a demanding judge who waits to see if the prodigal son can do it right before granting him entrance to the welcome-home party. Salvation by works is always a distortion of the truth. The biblical view of obedience

presents it as a grateful human response to divine grace.

2. *Relations with other Christians.* When Adventism leaves a conscientious believer haunted with a sense of impossible demands, the discovery of gracious and buoyant evangelical Christians who do have assurance of acceptance through Christ, raises significant questions about the "truth" of Adventism. "Remnant," "Babylon," and "beast" can all become troublesome terms in this context. Here I find biblical models helpful.

A strident (sectarian?) separation seems to have been unavoidable at crucial points in the experience of God's people: Israel and the Egyptians; Israel and the Canaanites; Judaism in the days of Ezra-Nehemiah; Christians and Jews in the days of Stephen. No wonder the Jews stoned Stephen—just read his blunt speech in Acts 7!

As for Adventism, events and circumstances in the nineteenth century made the scenario outlined in the book *The Great Controversy* quite believable. But the book *The Desire of Ages* points to a quite different approach to people, one that seeks first to affirm people for their goodness rather than attack them for their evil. In this respect, the remarkable chapter 70 in *The Desire of Ages* (637-641) is crucial.

In interpreting the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, Ellen White notes that the judgment of the nations turns on "one point": "what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering" (p. 637). She goes on to claim for God's kingdom those among the heathen "who have cherished His principles," "who have cherished the spirit of kindness" (p. 638). Evangelicals often stumble at that point, wanting to include only those who have explicitly accepted Jesus Christ. Those heathen who are "good" in God's sight, the "good" Moslem, the "good" atheist are all excluded—in spite of what Romans 2:12-16 seems to make quite clear.

Similarly marking a positive approach to others is the counsel given in *Gospel Workers* on how to work for others: "Speak to them, as you have opportunity, upon points of doctrine on which you can agree. Dwell on the necessity of practical godliness. Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines. Let the heart be won, the soil prepared, and then sow the seed, presenting in love the truth as it is in Jesus" (p. 120). "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4, NKJV) represents quite a different perspective. Clearly both are biblical, but circumstances and experience determine which emphasis receives priority. I focus on the growth and development of Ellen White's experience and theology as part of the solution to these tensions.

3. *Sabbath: gift or test?* Traditionally, Adventists have linked Sabbath with eschatology, emphasizing Sabbath as a test, and hardly noting it as a gift. Thus if a monolithic view of Adventist eschatology collapses for whatever reason, then the Sabbath goes with it.

Quite frankly, I don't know how one can experience a joyous Sabbath gift if one thinks of it first of all as a test—even though I would affirm that the Sabbath is a test in a more subtle way. If my wife were to insist that a timely arrival in the evening is a "test" of our love, it would be difficult for me to return home with joy. The same applies to the Sabbath.

Ironically, just when former Adventists are jettisoning the Sabbath, an increasing number of thoughtful Christians are casting longing eyes at the idea of Sabbath and writing some very good things about Sabbath (e.g., Marva Dawn, Eugene Peterson), even if their view of Sabbath does not include an emphasis on a specific day of the week.

With reference to all of the above, the extent to which I am willing to
continued on page 38

Graffiti against the gospel

Clifford Goldstein, well-known to readers of *Ministry*, and I discussed his just-released new book, *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies* (see page 10).

James Cress: A provocative title!

Clifford Goldstein: Yeah, it is. Too bad it wasn't mine. I submitted the manuscript with no title because I had none. Randy Maxwell of Pacific Press advertising came up with the title—a stroke of genius on his part.

Cress: What does it mean?

Goldstein: It's just a graphic way of saying that the biblical doctrine of the sanctuary is under attack again. Others have assailed the concept in previous years; this time a former minister has started a "ministry" aimed at Adventists. *Graffiti* responds to these attacks which decry as "cultic" the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 which culminated in 1844 with the initiation of the pre-Advent judgment—essentially, a no-holds-barred assault on the sanctuary and our understanding of the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

Cress: You wrote on this topic before?

Goldstein: Well, yes and no. Years ago I wrote a book, *1844 Made Simple*, a defense by a rather frenetic and relatively new believer. Since then, I have learned much more that has only increased my belief. These recent attacks provided a golden opportunity to respond and to share many of the things that I have learned as my thinking expanded and matured.

Cress: What things are in your new book which you have learned?

Goldstein: Well, I've included a whole section on the gospel and judgment. The Old Testament idea of judgment involved two factors: the vindication of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked—both elements. So it is not surprising that, in a depiction of the pre-Advent judgment, where the saints are vindicated, there

JAMES A. CRESS



would be an emphasis on the destruction of the antiChrist power as well.

Cress: The attacks specifically focus on Ellen White as well. Your response?

Goldstein: This is the heart of the issue. Such attacks on so-called "cultic doctrines" could be summarized: Ellen White endorsed the 2,300-day prophecy; the 2,300-day prophecy is wrong; Ellen White, therefore, could not be a true prophet. My response, simply, refutes claims that the prophecy is wrong. Then, attacks based on this premise fail. However, because these attacks (nothing really new, by the way) spew out accusations against Ellen White, I felt I had to address them. I came away strengthened in my appreciation for her and her ministry.

Cress: You said something about dealing with the gospel and the judgment.

Goldstein: I think that some of the attackers are victim of what I call "folk Adventism"—popular misconceptions about what we believe. Misconceptions which are at odds with the gospel.

Cress: Such as . . . ?

Goldstein: The idea that if you're not absolutely sinless when your name comes up in judgment, then your name is blotted out of the book of life and you will be forever lost even though you remain unaware and keep trying to overcome, but it's too late. This perverts the judgment because judgment is

good news. Judgment is the full and final application of the gospel in our lives, the climax of the gospel, the acquittal that we have from Jesus now by faith becoming final and irrevocable.

Cress: Once-saved-always-saved?

Goldstein: In a sense, Yes! After my name comes up in the judgment, and Jesus—as my Substitute, my Surety, my Sacrifice, my Mediator, and My Friend—stands in my place, pleading His perfect righteousness in my stead, I am once and forever saved. Up until the pre-Advent judgment, we can fall away, for salvation is always conditional. After "judgment is given in favor of the saints," salvation is irrevocable. Talk about good news!

Cress: So you're saying that the judgment and the gospel are in harmony.

Goldstein: Of course! What is the gospel? It's good news. Good news about what? Good news that Jesus died for our sins and through faith in Him we are covered by His righteousness. Otherwise we face eternal death. We all know John 3:16. We either get eternal life or we perish. The good news is that through Jesus we don't have to perish, we don't have to face eternal punishment, eternal damnation. Now, what is eternal damnation, or eternal punishment other than . . . what?

Cress: Judgment?

Goldstein: Precisely. So, regardless of whatever you believe about the timing of the judgment, or the nature of the judgment, the whole idea of the gospel, the good news, is that we are spared condemnation in judgment. There must be a judgment; otherwise what's the good news about? So the whole idea of the gospel contains within it the idea of judgment. There is no gospel without a judgment.

Cress: These thoughts all in *Graffiti*?

Goldstein: Some will have to wait for the next book. ■

Preaching with ERIC: Four sermon essentials

Patrick Boyle



Patrick Boyle is a retired pastor living in Watford, Hertfordshire, England.

Preaching is not sermonizing or lecturing, though sermonizing and lecturing are often substituted for, or understood to be, preaching. These substitutes mean that congregations are often subjected to anything from twenty-five minutes to one hour of human speech, empty of saving grace. This content can range from a display of intellectual brilliance to banal haranguing devoid of any meaningful content. Congregations suffer, endure, and sometimes find sleep the only method of escape from this form of religious persecution!

To be called of God to proclaim His saving truth in Christ Jesus is an incomparable privilege, a privilege often unrecognized and frequently squandered. The tragedy is not only that the worshipers are not fed but that the opportunity for God's grace and power to touch lives is wasted. The hour of worship becomes at best a social experience with light entertainment and, more often, an exercise in endurance.

What Christian preaching is and isn't

Preaching has never been without its detractors and critics. It never will be. But in its truest and best expression, gospel preaching lifts the human soul into the presence of God. The preacher becomes the agent through whom human need is connected to divine power. God and humanity meet in a divine

encounter that saves, energizes, and renews the soul. The church desperately needs this kind of preaching. For want of it congregations are developing into social comfort groups of many hues, insulated against reality and the power and presence of Christ.

Preaching in the contemporary pulpit can be subverted by PowerPoint presentations, ready-made sermons culled from the Internet, or plagiarizing from books or magazines. Congregations are starved for that encounter with God that preaching is designed to serve.

No preacher hits the target every time. Sometimes things go wrong, horribly wrong, despite our best efforts. Yet it is a fact that biblical preaching creates solid Christian experience.

Anyone who has been under living gospel preaching knows the blessing they experienced as a result. It moves men, women, and children toward God in a definite way.

In a ministry of over 40 years, I have had the privilege and joy of listening to and been blessed and saved by sermons from preachers great and small. The late Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones, Billy Graham, James Stewart, and John Stott are not alone in connecting the soul of man with the heart of God. Relatively unknown ministers and pastors in churches of all Christian traditions have, through their Spirit-charged preaching, lifted countless thousands into the presence of God. This is the ultimate reason for, and the goal of, true Christian preaching.

The elements of great preaching

Seventh-day Adventist congregations who have been blessed by preachers like Roy Allen Anderson, H. M. S. Richards, Norval Pease, and Charles Bradford know in their own lives the power and influence of this kind of preaching.

The common element in all of these preachers was the proclamation of the saving grace and power of Jesus. Like Paul, they were gripped by grace and compelled to proclaim it. They communicated to congregations what they believed and experienced of God's involvement in their own hearts and minds. They moved others because they themselves were moved.

It is hardly likely that a preacher will always meet the needs of all his hearers. It is also true that preaching that derives from the preacher's personal experience with God and his fellow men and women has the greatest

possibility of helping the greatest number who listen.

All effective preaching has common elements without which its value is significantly decreased. Preaching must come out of an ideology that informs and influences how and what the preacher believes and delivers.

This concept can be illustrated by posing the opportunity a minister has who is invited to preach in a church other than the one in which he ministers. What does he preach about?

Let's say you have been invited to preach to a congregation about whom you have no personal knowledge. What will you say that will bless those to whom you are called to minister? How can you reasonably expect to connect them to God?

Here is where an informing ideology or lack of it shows itself most dramatically. A preacher must know God, and he must understand men and women and their needs. These elements come from his own grappling with God's Word and his encounters with all classes through visitation in their homes.

What follows is a philosophy of preaching that has helped me avoid the more serious excesses of poor preaching. Though when I reflect on the many sermons I have preached, I cringe with shame and embarrassment for my stupidity and lack of awareness of what I was doing.

ERIC

Today when preparing any sermon, I write ERIC at the top of the page. This acronym expresses an ideological approach to sermon preparation. It has helped save me from lecturing, and much of the time from sermonizing. What it does is focus my mind on what I should be doing. It stands for essential elements for a sermon: encouragement, relevancy, instruction/illustration, and Christ.

Encouragement

Everyone benefits from encouragement. No one is likely to reject encour-

agement. When you actually reflect on the realities of your hearers, that they come from all walks of life, you can easily grasp the idea that encouragement—something specifically encouraging—will help most of them.

The sick will be encouraged. Parents attempting to bring up children in the Christian way will be encouraged. Young people trying to work out what to do with their lives will be encouraged. The elderly who may feel useless, the unemployed, the chronically ill, the discouraged, each and every one of them will benefit from encouragement, especially if it is born of the divine, finding its meaning and authenticity in your own soul.

Encouragement that comes to them from the heart of God will lift them up and stiffen their resolve to press on to better things. Encouragement creates hope and blesses the soul of the hearer and the preacher. Nobody rejects encouragement or is hurt or depressed by receiving it.

Sermons must have an element of encouragement to be effective.

Relevancy

It is fatally easy to preach irrelevant sermons. By irrelevant I mean sermons that do not scratch where people itch. Regrettably, who has not been a victim—preacher or worshiper—of this misfortune?

This fact came home to me some years ago when I was invited to teach a Sabbath School class. The topic was "Preparation for Marriage." The class was a group of elderly ladies, some of whom were spinsters. Not one was under 70 years old. Mercifully, all of us saw the humor and the irrelevance of the topic in that particular setting!

But humor, not grace, enlivened the study hour. Relevance was absent.

Preaching must address human need with germane insight. It can and does have other aspects, but it must be relevant to those to whom it is directed. An aspirin will not help a man whose leg is going to be amputated. Discussing the tassels on the high priest's robe or defining the clas-

sic parameters of existentialism will not be relevant to the soul battling with despair or depression.

In this respect a preacher needs to carefully watch that he or she does not ride hobby horses. I know of one preacher who preached on the topic of music for 11 weeks in a quarter, including the Communion service. His irrelevance contributed to creating a disturbed and critical congregation. Conversely, preaching that is relevant makes for mature Christians who are motivated to live Christianly.

Relevance and pastoral visitation favor each other. A visiting pastor learns the needs of his congregation by being with them in their homes.

Andrew Blackwood wrote in an old volume: "A visiting minister makes a churchgoing congregation."¹ Visitation also creates awareness in the pastor of the actual realities of human need. It helps the pastor as preacher to be relevant in what he actually says in the pulpit.

Visitation has another important aspect: It is an antidote to ministerial depression and malaise. Visitation and contact with people in their homes give pastors perspectives on reality that save us from an unhealthy self-centeredness.

Instruction and illustration

No one is born with know-how. We learn by instruction, illustration, imitation, application, and implementation. Preaching must not only encourage and be relevant but also help people to know *how*. The scope of preaching is vast, and the average person in the pew will not know all the subject matter we will present to them. But our people need not only to know but also to know *how*.

How do I exercise faith? How do I repent and confess? What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? How do I participate? How do I witness? How am I to prepare for the return of Jesus? How do I study God's Word to understand it? How do I relate to hostility? How do I live with confidence and faith? How do I deal with doubt?

How do I exercise saving faith? People need guidance to know *how*, and instruction in our preaching helps them come to know.

Thus, what people need is sermons with a *how-to* element in them. To assume our hearers understand as we do is a mistake—in many cases they do not, and we must instruct them how to learn to live the Christian life with faith and trust in their Lord.

I think it was Spurgeon who said “illustrations are like windows that let in light.”

The best illustrations come from our personal experience and that of our church members, many of whom have incredible stories to tell. These often come out in visitation. The illustration should do just that, illustrate.

We need to avoid the smart quip or the gratuitously funny story that purposely sends congregations into fits of laughter. While preaching is to be intensely interesting, it is not entertainment. Humor has a place, but it should never displace truth so that the congregation remembers the humor but not the truth.

Christ

Christ in all the sermon. Of all the indictments that may be leveled against preaching and preachers, the absence of Christ from their sermons is the most serious. Reflection on this omission makes one lament. Of all things, this omission is truly a failure.

One colleague observed, “You cannot get Christ into every single sermon.” I replied, “Then do not preach that sermon.” Sermons without Christ are often nothing more than information transfers, dry-as-dust harangues, exercises in egoism, intellectual performances, or ill-constructed presentations to fill in 30 minutes.

We need to grasp the reality of Christ’s words: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NKJV). This specifically includes and applies to preaching. Christ in all our preaching is not an option, it is the nonnegotiable essential that we dare not neglect or omit.

In the distant past when I went to college, we had a teacher, the late George Keough, who required students in his classes on any subject to read the book *Gospel Workers*. He invited us to memorize a variety of its passages. I bless him for his sagacity.

Some of these passages I have never forgotten. I quote one that has been invaluable to me:

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.”²

Sermons must have Christ at the center. Our duty and responsibility, but more our privilege, is to lift up Jesus before the people, to make Him great in their hearts and minds. The reasons for this are obvious. Without Jesus there can be no salvation. There is no other way to get to God; He alone is the way to God. There are no alternatives. As Peter expressed it, “There is salvation in no other” (Acts 4:12).

When Jesus is presented in our preaching, what is proclaimed does not fall on the ears and hearts of our hearers as some kind of addendum, some sort of afterthought. Rather it comes as the body and substance of what we have to say and also of what is essential to life well lived. Then salvation becomes possible for men, women, boys, and girls. Without Him, nothing happens. With Him souls are transformed, encouraged, energized, and uplifted; and they find freedom and joy, hope and courage. They become, in a word, Christians.

Preaching with ERIC—encouragement, relevance, illustration, and Christ—always carries with it the possibility of salvation. This informing ideology has potential. It is not the

only method, but it has guided one struggling preacher to understand that preaching has one purpose and end: to connect the soul of human beings with the heart of God in a saving experience. It is a wonderful privilege, and it invites our best efforts to make it happen. ■

1 Andrew Blackwood, *Pastoral Work* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1945), 220, 213.

2 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), 315.

Covenants

continued from page 5

Moral Law by their mention of the old covenant made at Mount Sinai), and other passages are implying that the standards of right and good, which are the transcript of God’s very character, were somehow abrogated in Jesus Christ. Far from it.

But again, Hebrews is saying that the partial, shadowy expressions of God’s character that came through the prophets, the sacrificial, priestly, and tabernacle services, *and even through the handwriting of God on Sinai rock when He gave the Moral Law to Moses* were partial and incomplete when compared to the perfect communication that came in the living-Son-of-God expressions of Jesus Christ Himself as He exposed them in His life and teaching; He Himself being the Architect and Author of the covenant and the Law to begin with.

Hebrews is saying that when Jesus Christ came, a much better, in fact a perfect expression of God (Heb. 1:3) was placed before humanity. Jesus as a man was, of course, God. How then could His living as a human among us be any more perfectly revelatory of God and of God’s will than it was? Indeed, what could be any more complete than such a manifestation? Certainly not even the written version of the Ten Commandments could claim such completeness. Thus it must be said that *the law of God and its moral precepts as*

they are lived out and expressed in the person of Jesus Christ are the ultimate antithesis of any kind of antinomianism.

Indeed, the new covenant is simply the old covenant personified. And it is personified by God in human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, Who was very God. This is not just a transcript of God's character, as was the Ten Commandments, but this is the Living God Himself.

This is what Jesus went to such lengths to clarify in His sermon on the mount, when He said such things as "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:17, 18). And more pointedly: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery [seventh command of the Decalogue].' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart . . ." (verse 27).

Contradictions?

But there are Paul's well known, apparently contradictory statements: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid, we establish it," and "Christ is the end of the law . . .," and "Now that faith [or Christ] has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

How can we (or Paul) have it both ways: that the law ended in Christ and that it was at the same time established in Him? How can such an apparent contradiction be?

Here again the wonder of what God accomplished in Christ comes out clearly, revealing to us that the arrival of the new in Christ elevates the old to such completeness and maturity that we are naturally constrained, even obliged, to let the old fade and to gladly embrace the new; to let the old legal supervision of our souls go even as we embrace the supervision of the living Christ Himself.

There is the passing of the old, but

only in the light of the coming of the new. There is never an ethical or moral vacuum, but instead the ushering in of a higher standard than ever; this time not written, but instead one that is alive with the ultimate quality of life. Thus the New Testament emphasis is not that "we are no longer under the supervision of the law [ceremonial and/or moral]" (Gal. 3:25) but that we are now under the superior supervision of Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit (see Gal. 3:21-25).

This, and not the abrogation of the seventh-day Sabbath and other moral principles, is what the New Testament is concentrating on as it elucidates the effects of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the installation of the "new covenant."

This is what Paul is saying in passages such as 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. It is what the Messianic arrival was all about at its heart. In Jesus the truth about God and moral rectitude are not abrogated, but instead they gloriously transcend even God's written, Siniatic, covenantal expression.

Distinctions between Moral and Ceremonial laws

Yet the distinction between the Moral and Ceremonial Laws must by all means be noted, even as it clearly is in the Bible.

The Moral Law rather obviously contains that which no society can do without and still survive for any length of time. It addresses that which is "genetically" infrastructural to human life on this earth, and thus by its nature it is impossible to dismiss without mortally wounding the human experience. By their nature the ten principles of the Decalogue—and again, God intentionally includes the fourth in this setting—are by their nature indispensable to the life of humanity as it has been created by God and constituted on the earth.

None of this can truthfully be said of the Mosaic Code or the Ceremonial Law. The Mosaic Code is that which by its nature is prophetic of a new and greater revelation yet to come. This is clearly seen in the Hebrew tabernacle-

temple services, the sacrificial requirements, and the priestly ministry of the Hebrew-Jewish system. These are all promisory and anticipatory, iconic and symbolic. The Mosaic Code may also be seen to be specifically definitive for the particular social, cultural, and political life of Israel, rather than obviously universal as in the case of the Moral Law.

In the way Jesus acted and behaved, in all that He was, and in all that He taught and stood for, He fully expressed the Moral Law to climactic perfection (see John 14:6-9), thus superceding its written expression.

In this, Jesus obviously did not remove the Moral Law in any way, but instead resoundingly confirmed it. When it came to the Mosaic Code, He was the fulfillment of all. It had pointed forward to Him, so that there was no need for it to continue once He arrived. From start to finish, this is what the book of Hebrews elucidates.

In illustration

In all this it is helpful to ask the following illustrative questions:

◆ In the end, which is a more authoritative and complete expression of a certain way of thinking or living: How that thinking is expressed in written form in a book, or the arrival of the author himself, coming in person to magnify before us what he formerly wrote in his book?

◆ Does the arrival of the author annul what the book has said? Absolutely not. The arrival of the author is entirely consistent with the book, and His arrival resoundingly establishes and elucidates the book's contents more comprehensively and thoroughly than ever.

◆ What gives us a better sense of what someone looks like or of what sort of person they are, a photograph or even a video of them, or the living ongoing presence of the person in our midst, so that we can in fact actually handle and touch and observe them (1 John 1:1-4 and John 16:5-15)?

◆ What is of more value, a person's skeleton or the living presence of that person among us in an actual conscious flesh and blood body?

♦ What's the best expression of a mother's requirements for her young daughter as she asks her to do the cleaning of the house: the card the mother writes out in her own handwriting outlining her ten-point cleaning procedure, or the act of that mother dropping what she is doing in the kitchen and going out to become "incarnate" with her daughter, taking the broom and the dustcloth herself and doing the cleaning while her daughter looks on and participates, so that the girl can see what the handwritten note meant to begin with?

♦ Does the mother's active cleaning do away with what remains in writing, or does it in fact confirm more than ever the written requirement, even while the written expression fades in the presence of the much clearer revelation that

comes with the mother's arrival on the scene of the sweeping and the dusting?

Conclusion

In Jesus, not only did the covenant shift from shadow to 3-D, but so did we.

What's at the heart of the covenant shift that occurred with the Messianic arrival of Jesus? Again, not the removal of any part of what is obviously abiding, holy, just, and good such as the seventh-day Sabbath, but instead the climactic, perfect, all-encompassing covenantal communication of God's love in the living being of the Lord Jesus Christ, now ratified not in the blood of lambs, but in the blood of the Lamb of God Himself. ■

1 All biblical quotes are taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

Response to Dale Ratzlaff

continued from page 32

modify traditional Adventism is solidly rooted in Scripture, in my study of Ellen White, and in my knowledge of Adventist history. "Change," "growth," and "development" are all difficult words, especially for those drawn to the Evangelical and Reformed tradition (as over against those in the Arminian and Wesleyan traditions).

Particular end-time scenarios are very fragile in Scripture. Dispensational evangelicals (the true inheritors of the Adventist love for a precise series of end-time events) solve the problem by projecting all unfulfilled aspects of Old Testament prophecy into the future, linked with the rapture, rebuilding of the temple, and an earthly millennium. To make it work, dispensationalism even brings back animal sacrifice during the 1,000 years. I believe there is a better way of being faithful to Scripture and to our Lord.

This is far more than you bargained for, Dale. By God's grace, good may come of it. May the Lord bless and guide you in your work.

Sincerely, Alden Thompson, School of Theology, Walla Walla College, College Place Washington 99324 ■

Pre-Advent judgment

continued from page 29

and man faithfully. In the pre-Advent judgment these unjust sentences by earthly courts will be reversed by the courts of heaven. In this way God will vindicate his saints."⁸

Beyond the vindication of the saints and the condemnation of the little horn, the pre-Advent judgment also vindicates God's justice in His dealings with humanity. When the unfallen beings in the universe examine the records of the saints during the pre-Advent judgment, they will come to the conclusion that indeed God has been just and merciful in each case.

In this way the character of God that has been at the center of the great controversy between Christ and Satan will be vindicated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study confirms that Daniel 7 depicts a judgment before the Second Advent. This judgment concerns both God's people

and the little horn. While the evil tyrant suffers extinction, God's people experience His saving justice and receive eternal life.

Moreover, through this judgment process God Himself is vindicated before the universe. At the second advent of Jesus, when rewards are bestowed, those who have maintained a living relationship with their Savior and whose names remain inscribed in the book of life become partakers of the eternal kingdom. ■

1 For other examples of investigative judgments in the Old Testament, see William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, revised edition, DARCOM. (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 1-29, Enc Livingston, "Investigative Judgment: A Scriptural Concept," *Ministry* (April 1992), 12-14.

2 J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1973), 136.

3 For other examples, see Samuel Bacchiocchi, "The Pre-Advent Judgement in the New Testament," *Adventists Affirm* (Fall 1994), 37-44.

4 Concerning the identity of the "Son of Man," see Arthur J. Ferch, *The Son Of Man in Daniel Seven*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series vol. 7 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1979).

5 F. Dusterwald, *Die Weltreiche und das Gottesreich* (Freiburg, Herder'sche Verlagsbuch-handlung, 1890), 177.

6 T. Robinson, *Daniel*, Homiletical Commentary, vol. 19 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1892), 139. Similarly, S. P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, 8th edition (Chelmsford. The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, n.d.), 36-38.

7 Norman Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1998), 413. See also Arthur J. Ferch, "The Pre-advent Judgment: Is It Scriptural?" *Australasian Record*, August 28, 1982, 5-7.

8 William H. Shea, "Theological Importance of the Pre-advent Judgment" in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 328.

1 Reissued in 2003. George Knight, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: Annotated Edition*. Edited with notes and a historical introduction (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2003).

2 All Ratzlaff's titles are published by his Life Assurance Ministries, Glendale, Ariz. Further information on the Web at <www.ratzlaf.com>.

3 Mark Martin, Dale Ratzlaff, Sydney Cleveland, Wallace Slattery, Dave Snyder, Dan Snyder.

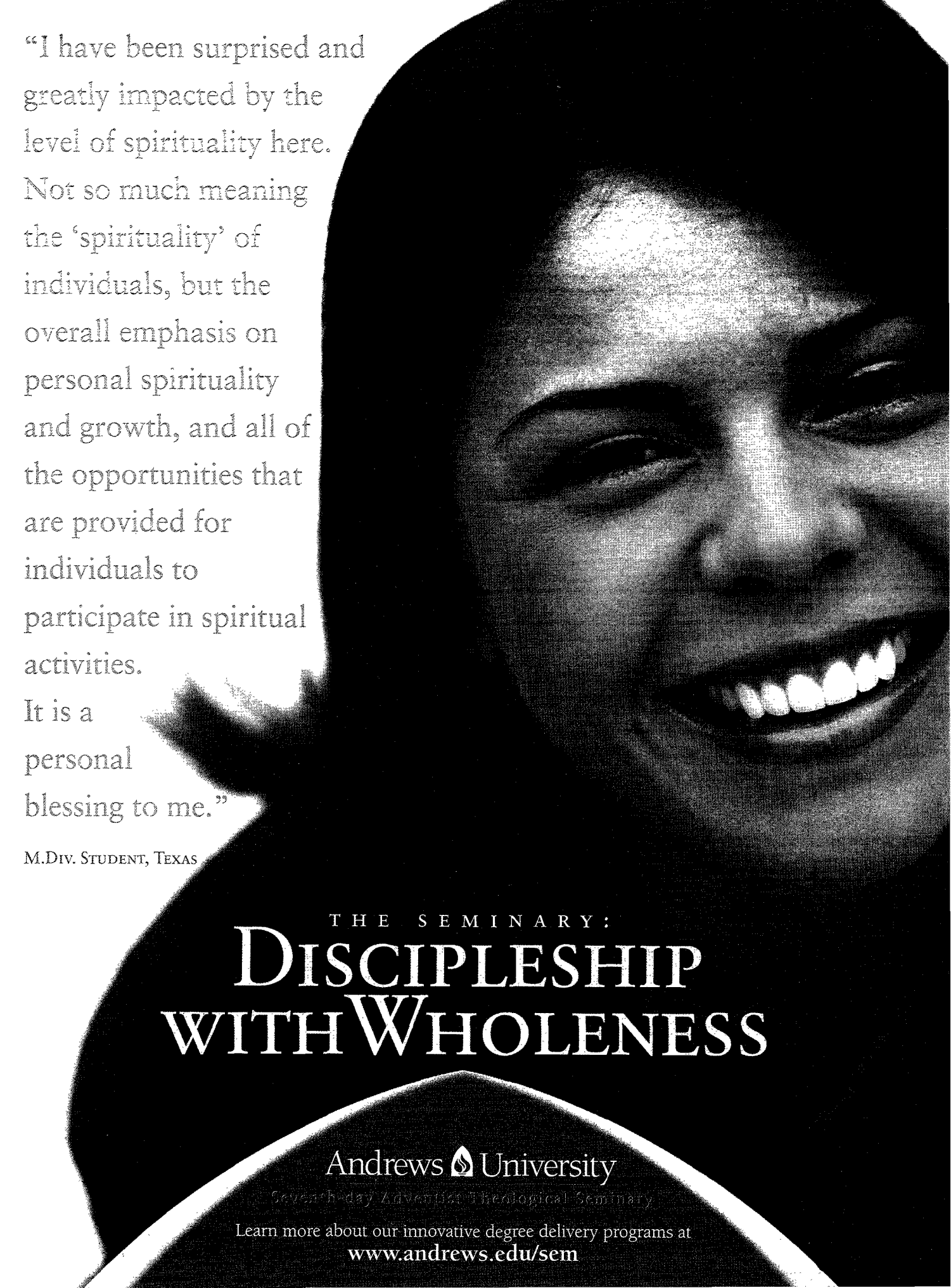
4 *Seventh-day Adventism. The Spirit Behind the Church*. Jeremiah Films, P.O. Box 1710, Hemet, CA 92546, 1998 (800-828-2290; <www.jeremiahfilms.com>).

5 *Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind the Church. A Personal Response*, by Alden Thompson and Dave Thomas (March, 2001), a one-hour video produced for and shown by Blue Mountain Television. Available for \$17.00 from Blue Mountain TV, P.O. Box 205, College Place, WA 99324; 509-529-9149; email: <manager@bluemtvtv.com>.

6 See chart in *Sabbath in Christ*, 348.

7 *Ibid.*, 152.

8 *Sabbath in Christ* (2003) introduces a new chapter (Chapter 20, "Righteousness Beyond the Law," 293-299) which, in my opinion, more nearly captures the spirit of Matthew 5. The chapter with which I take issue, however, remains—largely unchanged—as Chapter 18, "Jesus, the Law's Fulfillment," 265-278. The one significant change is the deletion of the last section ("New Covenant Morality," 231-233, in Chapter 14 of *Sabbath in Crisis*), the material developed in the new Chapter 20, "Righteousness Beyond the Law"



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