July 8, 2011

The Latest News and Columns from *Adventist Today*

**New AT issue reaching homes:**  *"The summer issue of *Adventist Today* is now posted at atoday.org and continues to reach subscribers' homes. Enjoy the Sabbath with an extra serving of *Adventist Today* news, analysis, and inspiration particularly the illuminating in-depth article on Ellen White, as a New Testament prophet, "Is Ellen White REALLY a Lesser Light?"  Read more*

**Riverside Press Enterprise sees *Adventist Today* as "Provocative" and "Pushing Boundaries":**  Cued by recent events at La Sierra University (LSU), and recognizing that *Adventist Today* has a office on campus, reporter David Olson of the *Riverside Press Enterprise* recently interviewed AT's Ervin Taylor about the magazine's role and goals in Adventism.

It begins, "In a recent opinion column in *Adventist Today*, a regular contributor blasted "religious zealots" who he said were interfering with academic freedom at Riverside's La Sierra University. He defended the right of faculty at the Seventh-day Adventist institution to counter official church teaching.

The first online comment in response to the essay defended Adventist orthodoxy and urged those who disagree with it to "get your own church!" The exchange was typical for *Adventist Today*, a publication that regularly features provocative essays that sometimes push the boundaries of Adventist thought. Read more

**Megacities: Love ‘em or Leave ‘em? - Lawrence Downing**...for the first time in history the majority of people live in cities...there is a one-in-eight chance that you are living in a slum in the developing world. Read more
**High Crimes, Misdemeanors, and 'The La Sierra 4:'** Attorney Nate Schilt weighs in with views on the legal and moral ramifications of the recent LSU resignations. Did the General Conference and university invade the men's privacy? Should the men have refused to tender their resignations? No, and Yes. *Read more*

**Bring Back Church Discipline:** Nathan Brown claims Adventism now treats its members as 'consumers' rather than participating members. Because business does not ordinarily 'discipline' its customers, Adventism too has lost that sense of responsibility—encouraging members to attend primarily out of "what's in it for them." A ticklish issue fraught with controversy. *Read more*

**Gratifying Praise for AT's La Sierra Coverage:** Feedback from the legal community in the La Sierra area has lauded AT's summary of the La Sierra situation as, "the most comprehensive, balanced overview we've seen thus far in Adventist-oriented publications." Read further of this highly discussed analysis and summary. *Read more*

**Nailed to the Cross:** Preston Foster writes, "All of my life, I have heard and accepted the Adventist teaching that, at the time of Christ's death, it was only the ceremonial law that was nailed to the cross. In contrast to most Protestant faiths who claim the entire law was nailed to the cross, Adventists teach that it was the ceremonial laws given to Moses that ended there." *Read more*

*Subscription required*
Is Ellen White REALLY a Lesser Light?

Submitted Jul 1, 2011
By J. David Newman

Ellen White and her relationship to the Bible have come under great attack by Dale Ratzlaff. A former Seventh-day Adventist pastor, he wrote *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, which has received wide circulation. In this book Ratzlaff says that “Ellen White has misinterpreted and misapplied Scripture on numerous occasions” and that the Adventist Church should “drop the writings of Ellen White as a source of authority.”

Ratzlaff portrays her as a plagiarist who unashamedly copied other people’s writings, not giving credit; who covered up what she had done while saying that the Bible was the only standard for truth; and who, at times, made it clear that she had the last word from God. He says that in addition to her copying, she also contradicted the Bible, taught doctrines that were against the gospel, changed her views many times, and was harsh to others while wanting great consideration for herself.

What role does Ellen White play today, almost 100 years after her death? Is she a “continuing and authoritative source of truth,” as Fundamental Belief #18 states? And if so, does that make her equal with the Bible, which is also a continuing and authoritative source of truth?

**Our Historical Position**

Ellen White herself called her writings a “lesser light” to lead people to the greater light—the Bible. There is a growing trend in the Adventist denomination today to make Ellen White the infallible interpreter of Scripture. See, for example, *The Remnant Study Bible*, in which the words of Ellen White are interleaved with the words of the Bible.

In our early years, Adventists were content to leave her precise role undefined. It was not until 1931 that the church developed a statement of fundamental beliefs printed in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. These beliefs were not voted by any authoritative committee but were the work of four men: M.K. Kern, F.M. Wilcox, E.R. Palmer, and C.H. Watson.

The original belief on spiritual gifts simply said this: “God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. ... These gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ.”

It was not until 20 years later that the following words were added to the statement in the 1951 *Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*: “The gift of the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. 1 Cor. 12:1, 28; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; Amos 3:7; Hosea 12:10, 13. They [Adventists] recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen
White."³

This definition stood for 29 years until, at the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, this part of the statement of fundamental beliefs was officially revised and made more authoritative. It is reproduced below as printed in the 1981 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook.

“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.)"⁹

If you look at this statement, you will find that we have tried to have it both ways. We have tried to make the Bible supreme, the final authority, and we have also tried to make Ellen White supreme, the final authority. This statement says that “her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth.” What does “authoritative” mean?

*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* defines authority as “the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues or disputes; jurisdiction; the right to control, command, or determine.”¹⁰ *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, while agreeing with this definition, adds “moral or legal supremacy.”¹¹

Now, we cannot have it both ways. The Bible cannot be the “standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” if the writings of Ellen White have “the power to determine” or to “settle issues or disputes.” There is only one final authority.

The suspicion that the denomination was trying to advance the supremacy of Ellen White through the back door is strengthened when we see the changes that took place in Fundamental Belief #1, which deals with the role of the Bible.

Prior to the revisions of 1980, this fundamental said in part that “[the Holy Scriptures] are the only unerring rule of faith and practice”¹² (emphasis added). In the new statement of 1980, the word “only” was dropped and we now read that “The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will ....” With the word “only” dropped, we left the door open for other “infallible revelations.” Yes, we still believe in the infallibility of the Bible, but we no longer believe that it is the *only* infallible revelation of God.

**Ellen White Unique**

While we dismiss Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy as counterfeits, we say that Ellen White is the only prophet God has appointed since New Testament times and that she holds a unique place in human history. I am not aware that our church has ever considered anyone else—even men like Martin Luther and John Calvin—to have the prophetic gift.

It is quite incredible that we could come up with this understanding considering what the Bible says about prophets in the last days. Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost quoted from Joel 2. “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18, NIV).
This passage is listed as one of the references to Fundamental Belief #18 on Ellen White and the gift of prophecy, yet the passage clearly states that more than one person will have the gift of prophecy. Why do Adventists limit this gift to one person?

Furthermore, the Bible stresses the importance of gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to the church. In Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, the gift of prophecy is listed as one of the gifts. It is not limited to one person or to one time. There is not the slightest hint that while all of the other gifts could be manifested in many people, this gift would only be manifested in the life of one person.

**Personal Struggles**

I grew up believing that Ellen White was perfect, that she never sinned, that she never had to struggle. But one day I came across this statement where she was describing her struggle to give up meat.

“I suffered keen hunger, I was a great meat eater. But when faint, I placed my arms across my stomach, and said, ‘I will not taste a morsel. I will eat simple food, or I will not eat at all.’ Bread was distasteful to me. I could seldom eat a piece as large as a dollar. Some things in the reform I could get along with very well; but when I came to the bread, I was especially set against it.”

Then I learned that she and her husband used to fight in their marriage. They did not battle physically, but they certainly did not mince words to each other. There was a time when James White was living in Michigan and Ellen was living in California. Each one believed the other should be the person to relocate.

Ellen wrote some letters to a friend named Lucinda Hall. Here is part of what she wrote:

“Should I come east, James’s happiness might suddenly change to complaining and fretting. I am thoroughly disgusted with the state of things, and do not mean to place myself where there is the least liability of its occurring. ... I must work as God should direct. ... God in his providence has given us each our work, and we will do it separately, independently. He is happy; I am happy; but the happiness might be all changed should we meet. ... A great share of my life’s usefulness has been lost. ... I cannot have confidence in James’s judgment in reference to my duty. He seems to want to dictate to me as though I was [sic] a child.”

In another letter to Lucinda, Ellen penned: “I sometimes think he is not a sane man, but I don’t know. May God teach and lead and guide. His [James’s] letter has fully decided me to remain this side of the mountains.”

James White was just as strong in writing back: “I shall use the good old head God gave me until He reveals that I am wrong. Your head won’t fit on my shoulders. Keep it where it belongs, and I will try to honor God in using my own. I shall be glad to hear from you, but don’t waste your precious time and strength lecturing me on matters of mere opinion.”

These insights and many others like them actually did not discourage me about Ellen White. For the first time, I began to see that she was human. That she was like me. That she went through her struggles. But others were not so forbearing. Men like Walter Rea (author of *The White Lie*) and Dale Ratzlaff have written scathing books condemning Ellen White as a plagiarizer, as deceptive, as arrogant, and as a liar.

They have pointed out issues concerning her that the church has no easy answer to offer. Adventists have spent millions of dollars in research to try to prove the infallibility of Ellen White, and we still...
have not satisfied the critics.

I believe there is an easier way—one that cuts to the heart of the issues and solves most of the problems. I believe that our published fundamental doctrine about the authority of Ellen White is wrong and that we need to change it. Ellen White herself reminds us that just because we have taught some things as truth for many years does not make them truth.

**Truth May Not Always Be Truth**

“There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.”\(^{17}\)

Now that can be a very scary statement to some people, but it’s true. We should always keep an open mind. We tell people from Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and other religious backgrounds to keep an open mind when we get ready to tell them about the Seventh-day Sabbath and other Bible doctrines. We want them to investigate ideas that are new to them. Yet once they become Adventists, we often reverse ourselves and refuse to recanvass what we have been taught.

Again on the same subject, Ellen White counsels us: “Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who [sic] we have a reason to believe desire to know what is truth as much as we do. Suppose a brother holds a view that differs from yours, and he comes to you, proposing that you sit down with him and investigate that point in the Scriptures; should you rise up filled with prejudice, and condemn his ideas, while refusing to give him a candid hearing? The only right way would be to sit down as Christians and investigate the position presented in the light of God’s word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position, though it were false, or strengthen your position, though it were true. *If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it, for it is foolish to become set in our ideas, and think that no one should interfere with our opinions. Let everything be brought to the Bible; for it is the only rule of faith and doctrine*” (emphasis added).\(^{18}\)

Ellen White also reminds us that we may even need to reverse ourselves on some things we had considered to be true: “We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.”\(^{19}\)

**The Bible Only**

There is little doubt as to the mind of Ellen White concerning the primacy and authority of the Bible. In an address to church leaders, she said: “How can the Lord bless those who manifest a spirit of ‘I don’t care,’ a spirit which leads them to walk contrary to the light which the Lord has given them? But I do not ask you to take my words. Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible. … When you make the Bible your food, your meat, and your drink, when you make its principles the elements of your character, you will know better how to receive counsel from God. I exalt the precious Word before you today. Do not repeat what I have said, saying, ‘Sister White said this,’ and ‘Sister White said that.’ Find out what the Lord God of Israel says, and then do what He commands.”\(^{20}\)
In an earlier letter, she wrote: “In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written, as authority to sustain your positions. To do this will not increase faith in the testimonies. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White.”

**Truth to Unfold More and More**

God expects us to think and study for ourselves, and some of us may come to new insights that need to be shared with the larger church. Ellen White says: “But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them. That wonderful ‘I’ may attempt to put down the Holy Spirit’s teaching. Men may for a time attempt to smother it and kill it; but that will not make error truth, or truth error. The inventive minds of men have advanced speculative opinions in various lines, and when the Holy Spirit lets light shine into human minds, it does not respect every point of man’s application of the word. God impressed His servants to speak the truth irrespective of what men had taken for granted as truth.”

**Definition of Prophet**

So what exactly is a prophet? The earliest mention of the term *prophet* in the Bible is found in Genesis. God is speaking to Abimelech, king of Gerar, who had taken Sarah, Abraham’s wife, to be his wife. “Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die” (Gen. 20:7, NIV).

Persons with a wide range of associations were called prophets because each in some way claimed to be communicating a divine message. The patriarch Abraham spoke for God to Abimelech as a prophet. Aaron, the brother of Moses who would become the first high priest, was likewise called a prophet (Ex. 7:1), and the singer Jeduthun (1 Chron. 25:3) was also called a prophet.

Some individuals—such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Samuel—are recorded as receiving specific calls to the prophetic office. The primary role of the prophet was to speak directly for God. This speaking was for encouragement, exhortation, or reproof, and it was rarely predictive. The root meaning of prophet is “to see, perceive, understand.” That is why sometimes the word for prophet is translated as *seer* (1 Sam. 9:9).

**Old Testament Prophets**

Old Testament prophets served as direct messengers from God, sent to speak to men and women the very words from God. For example, we read of the prophet Haggai: “Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: ‘I am with you,’ declares the LORD’” (Hag. 1:13, NIV). Likewise, Nathan came with a direct word from God to King David (2 Sam. 12:25). Prophets spoke with authority, reminding Israel of the terms of the covenant and the penalties for disobedience (Jer. 7:25; 2 Chron. 24:19; Neh. 9:26).

The prophets’ role was to speak the very words of God. “Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” (Ex. 4:12, NIV). “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (Deut. 18:18, NIV). “‘Well, I have come to you now,’ Balaam replied. ‘But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth’” (Num. 22:38, NIV).

Sometimes the prophet delivered messages from God using the pronoun “I,” but it would be clear to the people that the prophet was not speaking for himself but for God. “I am the LORD, and there is
no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,” (Isa. 45:5, NIV).

If the people disobeyed such a message from the prophet, they were in actuality disobeying God. “If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account” (Deut. 18:19, NIV).

When a prophet spoke in the name of God, no one questioned whether or not the message was true. If what the prophet said did not come true, then he was a false prophet. “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:22, NIV).

When delivering a divine message, a true prophet never spoke some of God’s words mixed with some of his own words. His message was either completely true or else it was false. For example, Micaiah was willing to stake his reputation on the fulfillment of just one prophecy when he said to King Ahab, “‘If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me.’ Then he added, ‘Mark my words, all you people!’” (1 Kings 22:28, NIV).

The Old Testament was written by prophets—Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc. However, some prophets such as Iddo (2 Chron. 13:22) wrote books that never appeared in Holy Scripture. Others—like Nathan and Elijah, who spoke fearlessly to the reigning king on several occasions—delivered God’s messages but never wrote a book.

**Prophets in the New Testament**

Wayne Grudem, a Protestant theologian, wrote his doctoral dissertation on the gift of prophecy. He makes a careful distinction between the writers of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament. He states that the Old Testament was written by *prophets* but that the New Testament was written by *apostles*. The apostles are not normally called prophets; prophets and apostles were two separate offices in the New Testament. However, the apostles spoke the direct word of God as the prophets did in the Old Testament.23

Old Testament and New Testament inspired writings are connected by Peter. “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles” (2 Peter 3:2, NIV). Prophets gave the word of God in the Old Testament, and apostles gave the word of God in the New Testament.

Paul as an apostle insisted that his message came directly from Christ. “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12, NIV). This is in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets (Deut. 18:20; Jer. 23:16ff).

Paul many times emphasized that he spoke directly for God. “According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep” (1 Thess. 4:15, NIV); “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed” (2 Thess. 3:14, NIV).

**Why Apostle Rather Than Prophet?**

If the New Testament apostle is so similar to the Old Testament prophet, why didn’t God use the same title? Grudem gives three reasons.
1. Joel’s prediction of prophecy for all God’s people. Joel predicted an outpouring of prophecy that would fall on many people, not just on a select few as in the Old Testament. “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29, NIV).

Prophets in the Old Testament wrote down the very words of God, and their writings became the unique Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. In the last days, when God pours out his spirit in a special way on people (just about everyone receiving the gift), he wants to make a distinction between their gift and the gift as given in the Old Testament.

2. Meaning of the word “prophet.” By the time of the New Testament, the meaning of the word prophet had changed in the world as a whole. It had come to mean “one who has supernatural knowledge without any connotation of divine authority.” It had lost its meaning of prediction, foretelling the future. The title prophet no longer automatically meant one who spoke the authoritative words of God. The term had become too watered down to have any authoritative meaning.

The Jews had accepted much of this modern meaning and no longer used the word prophet in the way it was used in the Old Testament. Paul employed this general use of the term when writing to Titus. “Even one of their own prophets has said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons’” (Titus 1:12, NIV).

3. A new term for Christ’s representatives. God established a new order after the death and resurrection of Jesus. While much remained the same, yet there were some crucial differences. God may have decided that he wanted a new term to designate his authoritative leaders—those who would write the New Testament—and so he chose the term apostle. It tied in with prophet because its root meaning is “one who is sent.” In this case, it means one who is sent from God just as the Old Testament prophet was sent by God. It was not a common term before the New Testament, so it would not be confusing to people and was a word that was free from misleading implications, both from the Old Testament and from the secular world.24

Prophet Defined
There are three major passages on spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Eph. 4:11), and they all list prophecy as one of the gifts the Holy Spirit gives. There is no indication that this gift is limited to a very few select persons. On the contrary, Paul wanted everyone to prophesy. “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:1, NIV). The primary purpose of New Testament prophecy, he says, is for strengthening, encouragement, and comfort (verse 3, NIV).

Paul says, “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified” (verse 5, NIV). Prophecy is something special, something important for God’s people. It is for their encouragement, their help, their joy.

Paul then says something interesting about how to deal with prophets, which is very different from the Old Testament. He says, “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (verses 29-33, NIV).
The congregation in Corinth contained several prophets. They should speak one at a time. One prophet could interrupt another prophet (unheard of in the Old Testament). Furthermore, the people were no longer to assume that what a prophet said was the absolute authoritative word of God. Listeners were to compare what the prophet said with the revealed will of God in the Bible. Everything was to be judged by the Bible.

Let us summarize what Paul is saying about this spiritual gift. It involves a specific revelation (verse 29) that God gives to someone whom he chooses, and the revelation is to be given publicly (verses 29-31) for the “strengthening, encouragement, and comfort” as well as instruction of another individual (verses 3, 31). When the prophet speaks declaring that he or she has a revelation from God, those hearing it are to judge whether it indeed has come from God. If they agree that it is God’s words, then they are to listen and follow what the prophet says.

**New Testament Prophets Could Be Mistaken**

“After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, ‘The Holy Spirit says, “In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles”’” (Acts 21:10-11, NIV).

Agabus got some of his details wrong. First, he predicted that Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul. But later on, in verse 33, Luke tells us: “The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done.” So it was the Romans who bound Paul, not the Jews.

Second, Agabus predicted that the Jews would deliver Paul into the hands of the Romans. Instead, the Roman centurion had to rescue Paul from the Jews who were trying to kill him.

An Old Testament prophet would have been stoned to death if he had made these kinds of mistakes. But the prophet is a different kind of person in the New Testament. The Old Testament is full of prophecies in which the smallest details always came to pass exactly as foretold, whether it was the dogs eating Jezebel (2 Kings 9:35-36), Elijah promising that the meal and oil would never run dry (1 Kings 17:16), or Elisha predicting in famine-stricken, besieged Samaria that one day later, about the same time of day, a measure of fine meal would be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria (2 Kings 23:16).

It seems that Agabus had a general revelation from God about Paul’s capture that was not given in great detail. And apparently Agabus decided to throw in some extra details, which were correct in general but not in detail.

**Application to Ellen G. White**

How does this apply to Ellen G. White? We have seen that she makes it clear that the Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice, that everything is to be judged by the Bible, and that she is a lesser light to lead people to the greater light. Now a lesser light cannot be equal to a greater light. And if Ellen White is to be tested by the Bible, we cannot then turn around and make Ellen White the determiner of what Scripture means.

But if we see Ellen White as a New Testament prophet, things become much clearer. She is a prophet of God. God gave her gifts that would apply to the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. This gift was not universal, like the Old Testament prophetic gift that applied to all people worldwide. Ellen White was given just to the Adventist Church.
Ellen White when using Scripture is mostly “homiletical” and “evangelistic,” says Robert Olsen, former secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate. “We cannot use Ellen White as the determinative final arbiter of what Scripture means. If we do that, then she is the final authority and Scripture is not. Scripture must be permitted to interpret itself.”

Here is but one example. In Genesis 3 we have the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve. Ellen White says of Eve that “absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone she felt an apprehension of danger” as she studied the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After Eve took and ate the fruit, “she sought his [Adam’s] presence, and related all that occurred.”

However, the Bible says that “she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6, ESV).

When I have discussed this difference with conservative Adventists, they have always come down on the side of Ellen White and not the Bible. Ellen White has now become the greater light and not the lesser light.

As counseled in 1 Corinthians 14, we are to study the prophet’s words, see if they agree with Scripture, and—if they do—accept them as from God. And if not, then we go with the Bible. We do not need to make Ellen White infallible, which she did not claim, or to use her as the final authority in any argument.

Given this understanding of the word prophet, we no longer must defend everything that Ellen White said. We can say that she was fallible and even wrong at times, period. If we would teach this, we would take away a huge argument from the critics of the Adventist Church.

**Ellen White’s Role**

In the New Testament, the role of the prophet changed. The church no longer lives under a theocracy. Everyone has direct access to God. The role of the prophet is to encourage people in their relationship with God. It is no longer an emphasis on rules, but on relationships.

It is clear that Ellen White was essential to the founding and establishing of our denomination. It is also clear, through the many visions she received and the kind of life she lived, that God was with her. No scandal erupted concerning her, nor did her contemporaries question her morality and ethics.

Ellen White described her role as one of encouraging people to study the Bible. “The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”

Unfortunately, our denomination has too often acted as if both lights were equal. If Ellen White is the lesser light, then she can never be as important or as authoritative as the greater light. The purpose of her writings was not for us to study them in every detail, but to cause us to go back to the Bible and find in it the great and eternal truths God gave.

According to T. Housel Jemison, a former Andrews University professor, Ellen White wanted: (1) to exalt the Bible, (2) to attract minds to the Bible, (3) to call attention to neglected truths, (4) to further impress truths already received, (5) to awaken minds, (6) to simplify truths, (7) to bring out principles
and help apply them, and (8) to instruct in details.29

But greater and more important than the above was her consuming desire to see people enter into a vibrant relationship with Jesus. She took the principles of the Bible and applied them to situations in the 19th century to help us in our walk with Jesus. But the farther away we get from the 19th century, the less helpful Ellen White becomes.

We cannot receive direct counsel from her on the following issues: abortion, nuclear disarmament, environmental pollution, gay rights, the almost universal tolerance of divorce under any circumstances, running hospitals in our extremely competitive environment, institutionalization of the church, reorganization of the church given its growth and size, tithing and the storehouse, ordination of women, celebration worship, whether or not the KJV is the superior translation (as some advocate), videos and computers, how to change standards as culture changes, the organization of a universal church (should it be the same in all countries?), ethnic balance and makeup of the General Conference, and more.

We must return to the Bible, find the principles there, and then apply them to our day.

Ellen White's Personal Growth

Ellen White grew in her understanding of truth. In her early years, she talked a lot about perfection and becoming sinless before Jesus comes. In her first book, she wrote: “I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.”30

By contrast, in 1911 she wrote: “Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.”31

In 1915, the year of her death, she wrote: “I do not say that I am perfect, but I am trying to be perfect. I do not expect others to be perfect; and if I could not associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not know what I should do. ... No one is perfect.”32

God and Children

In 1864 Ellen White wrote: “God loves honest-hearted, truthful children, but cannot love those who are dishonest.”33 “The Lord loves those little children who try to do right, and he has promised that they shall be in his kingdom. But wicked children God does not love. He will not take them to the beautiful City, for he only admits the good, obedient, and patient children there. ... When you feel tempted to speak impatient and fretful [sic], remember the Lord sees you, and will not love you if you do wrong.”34

Twenty-eight years later, in 1892, she wrote: “Do not teach your children that God does not love
them when they do wrong; teach them that he loves them so that it grieves his tender Spirit to see
them in transgression, because he knows they are doing injury to their souls.”

**Growth in Prophecy**

In the first edition of *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White said, “The message of Revelation 14
announcing the fall of Babylon … must be given in the last days, therefore it cannot refer to the
Romish Church, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries.” In the 1911
revision, she wrote, “The message of Revelation 14 … cannot refer to the Roman Church *alone*, for
that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries” (emphasis added).

Do you see the difference? “The pastor did not rob the bank.” “The pastor did not rob the bank
alone.” There is quite a difference in meaning once you add just one word.

I could give other examples. The question, of course, remains this: At what time in Ellen White’s life
is she completely authoritative? Ellen White’s messages are important to the Seventh-day Adventist
Church, but they are not the Bible. She was inspired of God, but her writings are not the Bible. We
are to check her out by the Bible, just as the church in Corinth had to check on the prophets in its
midst as to the veracity of their statements.

Ellen White was given messages from God to help start this denomination. She was given divine
messages to counsel and help the church leadership. Her visions helped to establish a strong
educational and health emphasis for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But she is the lesser light to
lead us to the great light: the Bible, which tells us of the Light, Jesus Christ.

**Church Has Ignored Ellen White**

The Adventist Church has, in practice, already determined that everything that Ellen White spoke
was not authoritative, not a direct word from God for all time. The 1989 General Conference Spring
Meeting of the Executive Committee voted to remove the administrators of Adventist hospitals from
the denomination wage scale and to allow them to set much higher salaries than had been previously
allowed.

This was in direct opposition to the counsel of Ellen White, who was very specific in this area. Ellen
White was also specific that tithe should not be used for paying teachers in our schools—especially
elementary schools—or for supporting colporteurs.

“One reasons that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others reason that canvassers and
colporteurs should be supported from the tithe. But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn
from the object for which it is to be used—the support of the ministers. There should be today in the
field one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one.”

Yet at the 1985 Annual Council, the tithe-use policy was changed so that elementary teachers could
be paid up to 30 percent of their salary from tithe. The payment of colporteurs from tithe had begun
much earlier.

Furthermore, Ellen White specifically says that we *should* pay minister’s wives from tithe, yet we
ignore that counsel, saying that we do not have enough tithe to do that. Of course not, since we are
paying teachers from tithe!

I could give scores more examples, but these are enough to help you see that it is too easy for the
denomination to speak out of both sides of its corporate mouth when it comes to the authority of
Ellen White. When it suits our purpose, we declare that we must follow exactly what the Spirit of Prophecy says, but when economic and other pressures bear upon us, we become pragmatic and find a way to rationalize her counsels.

**Prophecy at the Local Level**

Should we look for the gift of prophecy to be evident in the local church? Yes, if we are to follow the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the outpouring of God’s Spirit in the last days and the giving of spiritual gifts.

The gift of prophecy is the divine enablement to reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance, or edification. There may be immediate or future implications. But it must come as a direct revelation from God.

People with this gift have a unique ability to expose sin or deception in others in such a way that reconciliation takes place without their feeling condemned.

People with this gift speak a timely word from God that causes conviction, repentance, and edification. They see truth that others often fail to see, and they challenge others to respond. They will warn of God’s immediate or future judgment if there is no repentance. They will speak their messages in love, avoiding pride or any kind of superior attitude.

Others will recognize that they have this gift. The hearers will know that this person is speaking for God, because God has impressed the hearers as well.

I believe that part of the reason so many independent ministries are springing up to reform the church is because we have not allowed any kind of prophetic gift to continue operating in the Adventist denomination. These independent ministries believe that they have been called to interpret Ellen White and sound the call back to the “blueprint.”

Places like Hartland Institute and Our Firm Foundation exist because the church has in many ways ignored the counsels of Ellen White without giving compelling reasons for differing. Too often the changes have occurred because of financial pressures.

In the financial world, we have auditors who check to see that management has been faithful in following the rules, laws, and procedures of wise financial management. Likewise, we need spiritual auditors who can check the spiritual pulse of the church—people who are known for their high spirituality and deep devotion to God. Without such individuals, members believe what they want to believe about the condition of the church. Leadership laments the lack of true spirituality but does little about it.

Let’s begin to look for and practice the biblical gift of prophecy. Let us look for those people whom Joel says will, in the last days, “prophesy and have visions and dream dreams.” If we are in the last days, we should be experiencing this reality. If we lack faith, God will pass us by.

As Paul said, “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:1, NIV).

**Gifts and Grace**

The purpose of spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, is to lead people to Jesus, to understand his great Gift. The Greek inextricably links spiritual gifts and grace. The word for “spiritual gift” is *charisma*. The word for grace is *charis*. So God has given to his church gifts (plural) to help people lead the unsaved to the Gift (singular). And these gifts are to be exercised with joy since when a
person understands that God’s salvation is free, that it requires no works of mine, that I am totally accepted by God just as I am, and that he longs for me to possess this precious gift, that person will be filled with inexpressible joy and peace.

The accent is always on the Gift, God’s grace, never on the messenger. Let us keep our focus and our energies bent on sharing God’s Gift through the gifts he has given us. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet. 4:10, NIV).

*J. David Newman is editor of Adventist Today and senior pastor of the New Hope Adventist Church in Fulton, Maryland.*

1. Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 1996). This book is now in its second printing. Ratzlaff also publishes the magazine *Proclamation!* which encourages Adventists to leave the denomination and find real grace and peace.
2. ibid., p. 344.
8. 1951 *Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, p. 6.
12. 1980 *Year Book of Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 5.
15. ibid.
16. ibid., pp. 75-76.
17. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 35.
26 White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 54-54.
27 ibid., p. 56.
33 White, *An Appeal to the Youth*, p. 42.
34 ibid., p. 62.
35 White, “Ye Are Complete in Him,” *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 15, 1892.
39 White, Letter 137 (to “Dear Brothers Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones”), April 21, 1898, p. 9.

There are no comments.
UPDATE ON DR. PIPIM’S RESIGNATION:

Dr. Pipim resigned from the Michigan Conference on May 23, 2011 and made the news public on May 29 via the CAMPUS website (www.campushope.com/resignation) and subsequently on this DRPIPIM.ORG site. The following update on his resignation consists of:

1. His June 12, 2011 letter to key African leaders (some of his colleagues in ministry on the continent and abroad), mentioning, among other things, why he chose to make his confession and resignation public.
2. His June 16, 2011 email to his former CAMPUS Team (and later to his local church family), explaining to them why he personally requested and submitted to church discipline.

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LETTER TO AFRICAN LEADERS: Update on Resignation

From: Samuel Koranteng-Pipim Date: June 12, 2011 1:34:54 PM EDT
To: My African Colleagues in Ministry
Subject: Thank You & Update

My Dear African Leaders [Ministry Colleagues on the Continent and Abroad], I thought I should give you a quick update. Exactly two weeks ago I notified you of my resignation from my present work, and subsequently issued my public announcement to the world via our CAMPUS website (www.campushope.com/resignation). As expected the news has been greeted with deep sorrow and pain among those who love the cause of God, and it has also given cause for our critics to do what they do best (although some of them have been generous).

As regards the youth, students, and young professionals who have been impacted by our ministry, their responses from around the globe have been more than I expected—or deserve. Despite the public humiliation, they have appreciated the candor and prompt manner in which the issue was handled and they have all pledged their prayers and support. Many have urged me not to be discouraged to the point of abandoning the ministry and my work to young people. Others have urged me to quickly get back and continue to work in whatever line the Lord will reveal.

I want to thank you for your prayers and encouragement. Let all the faithful know that I'm in good spirits. I see this whole experience as God's efforts to save my life. Thus, my faith is stronger than ever before. And I'm more committed than ever to the cause of proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages. It's a stumble, not a fall. In God's own time I'll continue from where I left off.

As I've mentioned to many people, my public confession and resignation was an act of faith. It was consistent with the message of integrity and "faithful unto death" sermon series I've taught and preached. Moreover, the decision is an attempt to model what I teach. We must set good
examples in both how we deal with our successes as well as our failures. Painful, though it has been, I pray it would be used by the Lord to bring about soul-searching, a distrust of ourselves, and a whole-hearted dependence on the Lord. By God's grace I'll rise again, and what was meant for evil could very well turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

Already, I'm beginning to see that the Lord will use even this incident to His glory. Judging from the reaction and responses I'm receiving, I don't think that any of my sermons or books has had as great an impact as this incident in calling for deep soul-searching and total surrender of self. . .

Again, thanks for your continued prayers and support.

Sincerely,

Skp

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LETTER TO CAMPUS TEAM: Why Dr. Pipim Requested & Submitted to Church Discipline

From: Samuel Koranteng-Pipim
Date: June 16, 2011 9:22:58 AM EDT
To: CAMPUS Team
Subj: My Submission to Church Discipline

Dear Colleagues, Students, Friends, & Supporters:
On Wednesday, June 15, 2011, my local church took an action to discipline me. Below is a chronology of the events leading to the action, the nature of the disciplinary action, and my response to it. Thank you for your continued prayers. You are always in my prayers. SKP

Submission to Church Discipline
On Sunday, May 29, I publicly announced my resignation as Director of Public Campus Ministries and from Michigan Conference employment. I did so via a message to my "Colleagues in Ministry" and "CAMPUS staff, etc." (www.campushope.com/resignation).

From Wednesday June 1 - Wednesday June 8—Following the resignation announcement, I went on previously planned one-week vacation/retreat with seven members of our CAMPUS personnel.

On Tuesday June 7, towards the end of the one-week vacation/retreat, I sent an email to my Conference President, requesting a prompt disciplinary action from my local church. By a copy of that email, I also informed my close friends, family members, and CAMPUS Team of the necessity for this important, but oft-neglected, biblical teaching and practice (see APPENDIX I)

On Thursday, June 9, following my return from the vacation/retreat, I met with my local church pastor for prayers and discussed the need for a prompt disciplinary action.

On Friday, June 10, I wrote to my local church (via my church pastor), formally submitting myself to the disciplinary action of the church. (see APPENDIX II)

NOTE: When disciplinary measures must be taken, there are two ways by which the church does this:
1. By a vote of censure—whereby the church member is put on probation for a stated
period of time, from a minimum of one month to a maximum of twelve months. At the expiry of 
that period, if the church member’s conduct is satisfactory, that person is automatically 
considered in regular standing without further action.  

2. By a vote to disfellowship or remove from church membership 
—this is the ultimate in the discipline that the church can administer. The person so disciplined 
can only be re-admitted into the church after a rebaptism, when it is evident that the individual’s 
life is consistent with church standards. 

3. Thus, when I formally requested church discipline, I essentially expressed my willingness 
to accept whatever action the church would decide—whether censorship or disfellowship. (For 
reasons for which church members shall be disciplined, see APPENDIX III) 

On Wednesday, June 15—at a duly-called business meeting, my local church voted to 
disfellowship me (i.e., remove me from church membership).

[NOTE: I had left it totally up to the church to decide on whether the discipline should be a 
censorship or a disfellowship. I believe that the decision the church took was the right one, 
although many feel otherwise (some even didn’t think I should have resigned, let alone be 
disciplined). Among other things, my reason for believing that disfellowship was preferable to 
censorship is that disfellowship is the severest form of discipline the church can subject a 
person. Given my influence in the church, anything short of disfellowship might have been 
interpreted as a slap on my wrist. Moreover, at a time when this biblical teaching and practice is 
being watered down in certain quarters of our church, it is important to call attention to this 
teaching by subjecting myself to this biblical imperative. We should preach the gospel, not only 
when we are on the mountaintop, but also when we are in the valley. Perhaps, my willing 
submission to the disfellowship may also help members overcome their own fear or shame of 
church discipline—unfortunate situations which undermine true repentance and confession and 
which encourage secrecy and cover-ups in the church. The following is my formal response to 
my local church’s action. I communicated this in writing on June 16, a day after the church voted 
to discipline me, through my local church pastor. I also attached relevant Appendices, including 
(i) my reasons for believing in church discipline, and (ii) the reasons why a church member 
should be disciplined (as set forth in our Church Manual).]

My Response
I am grateful to the Ann Arbor church for its prompt action on this vital aspect of church life. By 
subjecting me to this disciplinary action, the local church shows that we cannot afford to deal 
lightly with sin—any sin—and that, no personal considerations should affect its decision to 
uphold biblical standards or teachings set by God. 

I willingly accept the discipline of my church family as an expression of its love for me, and its 
desire to work towards my spiritual renewal and restoration (cf. Hebrews 12:5-11). By subjecting 
me to the severest form of church discipline, I understand the church to be calling me to the 
highest standards of spiritual excellence—a biblical principle I have taught by voice and by pen. 
This principle still applies, even though I failed to live by it. 

Though disfellowshipped, I still subscribe to the biblical teachings and mission of the church, 
and I purpose to employ my personal efforts to advance the cause. I look forward to the day 
when, through re-baptism, I can be restored to full and regular standing within the church. To 
this end, I solicit your heartfelt prayers. 
For those who may question the necessity of such discipline, even when a person is repentant
and has made public confession, I can only refer to God’s discipline of Moses and Aaron when they sinned against God by striking the rock (Numbers 20:1-13). Here are some relevant insights from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 37, pp. 411-421:

“Bitter and deeply humiliating was the judgment immediately pronounced. “The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” . . . The Lord accepted their repentance, though because of the harm their sin might do among the people, He could not remit its punishment. {PP 419.1}

“The eyes of all Israel were upon Moses, and his sin cast a reflection upon God, who had chosen him as the leader of His people. The transgression was known to the whole congregation; and had it been passed by lightly, the impression would have been given that unbelief and impatience under great provocation might be excused in those in responsible positions. But when it was declared that because of that one sin Moses and Aaron were not to enter Canaan, the people knew that God is no respecter of persons, and that He will surely punish the transgressor. {PP 420.1}

“The history of Israel was to be placed on record for the instruction and warning of coming generations. Men of all future time must see the God of heaven as an impartial ruler, in no case justifying sin. But few realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Men flatter themselves that God is too good to punish the transgressor. But in the light of Bible history it is evident that God’s goodness and His love engage Him to deal with sin as an evil fatal to the peace and happiness of the universe. {PP 420.2}

“Not even the integrity and faithfulness of Moses could avert the retribution of his fault. God had forgiven the people greater transgressions, but He could not deal with sin in the leaders as in those who were led. He had honored Moses above every other man upon the earth. He had revealed to him His glory, and through him He had communicated His statutes to Israel. The fact that Moses had enjoyed so great light and knowledge made his sin more grievous. Past faithfulness will not atone for one wrong act. The greater the light and privileges granted to man, the greater is his responsibility, the more aggravated his failure, and the heavier his punishment. {PP 420.3}

“Moses was not guilty of a great crime, as men would view the matter; his sin was one of common occurrence. The psalmist says that “he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” Psalm 106:33. To human judgment this may seem a light thing; but if God dealt so severely with this sin in His most faithful and honored servant, He will not excuse it in others. The spirit of self-exaltation, the disposition to censure our brethren, is displeasing to God. Those who indulge in these evils cast doubt upon the work of God, and give the skeptical an excuse for their unbelief. The more important one’s position, and the greater his influence, the greater is the necessity that he should cultivate patience and humility. {PP 420.4}

“. . . There is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God. There is not a blessing which God bestows upon man, nor a trial which He permits to befall him, but Satan both can and will seize upon it to tempt, to harass and destroy the soul, if we give him the least advantage. Therefore however great one’s spiritual light, however much he may enjoy of the divine favor and blessing, he should ever walk humbly before the Lord, pleading in faith that God will direct every thought and control every impulse.” {PP 421.1}

The disciplining of Moses did not mean he would not be saved. After his death on Mt. Pisgah, he was resurrected by Christ and taken to heaven (cf. Jude 9; Matthew 17:1-9).
“Never, till exemplified in the sacrifice of Christ, were the justice and the love of God more strikingly displayed than in His dealings with Moses. God shut Moses out of Canaan, to teach a lesson which should never be forgotten—that He requires exact obedience, and that men are to beware of taking to themselves the glory which is due to their Maker. He could not grant the prayer of Moses that he might share the inheritance of Israel, but He did not forget or forsake His servant. The God of heaven understood the suffering that Moses had endured; He had noted every act of faithful service through those long years of conflict and trial. On the top of Pisgah, God called Moses to an inheritance infinitely more glorious than the earthly Canaan. {PP 479.2}

“Upon the mount of transfiguration Moses was present with Elijah, who had been translated. They were sent as bearers of light and glory from the Father to His Son. And thus the prayer of Moses, uttered so many centuries before, was at last fulfilled. He stood upon the “goodly mountain,” within the heritage of his people, bearing witness to Him in whom all the promises to Israel centered. Such is the last scene revealed to mortal vision in the history of that man so highly honored of Heaven.” {PP 479.3}

From God's dealings with Moses, we learn that church discipline does not necessarily mean a person is lost. Nor is it the end of a person’s ministry or usefulness to God’s cause. Discipline simply means that the Lord (and the church, the body of Christ) disapprove of the person’s sin and desire that individual (and the church family) to a renewed commitment to Christ. I pray that my submission to the biblical teaching of church discipline will accelerate the process of my own spiritual renewal and that, although painful, it will ultimately prove to be a blessing—as promised in Hebrews 12:5-11:

5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “
My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and don’t give up when he corrects you.
6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. 9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? 10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. 11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. (Hebrews 12:5-11; New Living Translation)

Local Church’s Response
On Thursday, June 16, 2011, I sent this response document (with the attached Appendices) to my CAMPUS Team, close friends, and family members. I also shared the response document with my local Ann Arbor church pastor and a senior (honorary) elder of the church, (a former Dean of the Theological Seminary at Andrews University). All three of us felt that reading my response to the church would be beneficial.

Thus, on Sabbath, June 18, 2011, during the divine service hour, the senior elder, on behalf of the church pastor who was then at camp meeting, read to the entire church my response,
willingly accepting the disciplinary action of the church. For the sake of members who were not in church on June 18, my entire response document was emailed later that day to the members of my local church. The email to the church members included the following note that my church pastor had sent to me, when he first acknowledged receipt of my June 16 letter:

From: Danny Velez (Local Church Pastor)  Date: June 16, 2011  4:59:59 PM EDT  To: Samuel Koranteng-Pipim
Subject: RE: Church Discipline

Hello Dr. Pipim,

It is a testament to the work of God in your life and heart that you are accepting the discipline of the church with such grace and integrity. As I stated to you over the phone, it was not an easy decision. You have, however, expressed it correctly and [accepted that the church discipline was an] action of Love for you and the cause that you championed. I can only imagine what God has in store for you and your family but I know that you will continue to be a voice for the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am in agreement with [the senior elder] to have your letter read to the church. I think that this will serve to unite the church through this painful ordeal, (We are all suffering with you). May I also send this letter via e-mail to the membership at large? [NB: I subsequently gave the permission for him to do so, and this was done on June 18 when church members were sent my entire response document]

I think that it would be good to make sure that everyone can have access to it in case they are at camp meeting or not able to attend church this week. Let me know. Please know that my family is praying for yours and if there is anything that we or I can do for you during this time we will be more than happy to do it.

In the Blessed Hope,  Danny Velez, Pastor

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APPENDIX  I My Reasons for Prompt Church Discipline

From: Samuel Koranteng-Pipim  Date: June 7, 2011  3:08:53 PM EDT  To: Jay Gallimore (President, Michigan Conference)
Cc: Micheff Jr (Executive Secretary, Michigan Conference)
Subject: An Urgent Request

Dear Eld. Gallimore, By God’s grace the one-week vacation/retreat is proving to be a blessing. It has bonded our CAMPUS staff together and has given us a renewed sense of purpose. This is a follow-up to our brief conversation I had with you shortly before we left for the retreat. This is in reference to church discipline. I know it's not up to me to decide, but I thought I should at least express where I'm coming from. The one-week reflection has made it even more clear to me. A little background is in order. It has been a very long and agonizing week since I turned in my resignation exactly one week ago, and since [I] subsequently issued my public announcement to the world via the message to my colleagues in ministry and our CAMPUS staff. As expected the news has been greeted with sorrow and pain among those who love the cause of God, and it has given cause for our critics to do what they do best.

Also, despite the pain and public shame, I’ve been greatly encouraged by the young people around the globe. They have understood what is at stake in the great controversy and have been challenged to step up in the good fight of faith. They have also appreciated the candor and
prompt manner in which we handled this issue. I wish I could share with you the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of emails I've received, pledging their prayers and support. Many of them have urged me not to be discouraged to the point of abandoning the ministry and my work to young people. Others have urged me to quickly get back and continue to fight in whatever line the Lord will reveal.

As I've prayerfully reflected on the situation, I feel strongly that this tragedy and moral failure must also summon us to display the beauty of one aspect of our biblical teachings. We cannot do so half-way. Yes, I've made things right with God, my family, the other person involved, my employers, loved ones, etc. I have also voluntarily withdrawn myself from all speaking engagements. However, there's still another area that requires prompt and immediate action—namely, in the area of church discipline. This aspect is also part of biblical teaching. I know that two of us are in agreement on this, but let me explain why it is necessary for me to be disciplined:

1. The urge (out of love by thousands of young people) for me to continue public speaking will not help the cause of God in the long run. It will give a false impression that sin is to be lightly treated, sending a mixed message to our people. Why? Many of our brothers and sisters, who still believe in the Church Manual, will fail to understand. It will be taken as double standard and [as] playing down the gravity of sin and lowering the standard of the church to suit the culture and the trend of the modern society. Some of our liberal friends will seize upon this and excuse their own permissive lifestyle as acceptable. [Similarly, those with "offshoot" streaks will use it to justify their warped view that ours is not the true Remnant Church.]

2. Those of us who have been at the forefront in setting public standards should be expected to uphold it. Thus, a moral failure, such as mine, requires church discipline or censorship. At a time when this vital aspect of ecclesiology is being watered down, we must use my tragic experience to teach our young people—and the church at large—the importance and value of church discipline. Of course it is up to the local church to decide the nature of the discipline, taking into consideration all the necessary factors and the attitude of the erring one. But if we skip this important aspect of church life, the impact of my resignation message of accountability and transparency will be weakened, if not lost on many people. Besides, I want to be able to speak clearly on the theological necessity of church discipline in the future---after my restoration---and illustrate it with lessons from the perspective of a person who has actually experienced church discipline.

3. Failure to go through with church discipline will also create a lot of discussion, causing people to take sides (for or against) and leaving me caught in the middle of the controversy. This is not necessary, and it is not the kind of legacy I want to leave behind. As I've articulated in my book Healed Wounds, but Ugly Scars, choices have consequences, and church discipline is one of such consequences. I have already lost my job—something I lived for; I have also lost my source of livelihood, my medical insurance at a time when the family needs it most, and I have damaged my credibility—at least in the eyes of those who don't appreciate what it takes to publicly take ownership of one's
mistakes. However all these losses will be negligible when compared with a loss of sound biblical teaching on church discipline.

4. Church discipline formalizes my decision to withdraw from public view. There are many who are honestly convinced that my public confession, remorse for my sin, and forsaking it is enough, and that I should not even have resigned. Some among them will argue that I should not be silent in proclaiming the Word of God. Based on Elijah’s experience, I see a place for a very limited quiet ministry—as he did after his fall, teaching in the schools of the prophets at Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, etc. 2 Kings 2. . . . However, this should be distinguished from public ministry. When Moses made a mistake, he decided to opt for silence and his coming back was so eloquent. It is better to observe a moment of silence and self-examination. That period of silence is needed by myself and by the church at large. When my spiritual walls are rebuilt, when my strength is renewed, I will come back stronger and will be of greater blessing again. The point is: We have started the right way, in our public confession and resignation from employment; let us finish the process with church discipline. As an African proverb says, “If you’re going to be bald on your head, your baldness must as well extend to your neck.”

5. If you see wisdom in my thoughts above, I think it would be necessary for the Michigan Conference to encourage my local Ann Arbor church to expedite the process by subjecting me to church discipline this week—certainly before we go for camp meeting [June 17-25, 2011]. A prompt and decisive action is the best way to go. Young people will appreciate it and it will send a clear message to the church regarding what we still believe. My work with young people has taught me that, whereas adults are afraid to take radical stands for the Lord, the youth are willing to go all the way.

6. All through my life and especially during my ministry I have sought, to the best of my ability, to do God’s will—regardless of consequences. You are well-aware of the high price I have paid in the church, simply for upholding sound biblical teaching—especially on the controversial, politically-correct subjects. Now is not the time to drop the ball. Even my failure should be an occasion to glorify the Lord. I know you’d agree with me on this point. I have taught young people to NOT expect anything less. They’d appreciate it even more, and their confidence in the church will be greatly increased. For the sake of the young people I love, let’s follow through on this.

7. A revival has already begun in the church—especially among young people. Let’s not do anything to kill it or slow it down. Failure to go all the way will certainly short-circuit the process and will deprive us of God’s blessings. Because of sin or disobedience to the Lord we experience God’s wrath. Hence He is unable to bless us, as much as He would have wanted to. This is what David says in Psalm 85:4-6

   4 Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us.
   5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
   6 Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

But with true revival, there is no longer the displeasure of God. (vv. 4, 5). Instead of God's wrath, we experience the joy of His glorious presence (v. 6) which “shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth” (Psalm 72:6). I want to see this happen in the church—certainly among the young people who are at the forefront of this work.

Thanks, Eld. Gallimore, for your spiritual leadership of the Michigan Conference. Only eternity will reveal how much we all owe to you for your faithfulness. Consider this email as my formal request for church discipline. We should not delay the process.

This is why I plead that it be done before we go for camp meeting [June 17-25, 2011]. Such an action will speed up the healing process at my end and will send the clearest message that we want to do the right thing.

I will be more than willing to discuss this further with you when I return. Thanks for understanding.

Sincerely,
skp

[NOTE: The above message, arguing for a PROMPT disciplinary action, was sent to my Conference President on June 7, towards the end of a one-week vacation/retreat with my CAMPUS staff. Upon our return from the retreat on the night of June 8, I met with my local church pastor on the night of June 9 to discuss the necessity of a prompt church discipline. Like my Conference President, my local church pastor was also fully supportive of my request as fully consistent with our Church Manual. Thus, the next day, June 10, I submitted my formal request for church discipline to my local church (see below).]

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APPENDIX II

My Formal Request for Church Discipline  From: Samuel Koranteng-Pipim Date: June 10, 2011 3:34:06 AM EDT  To: Daniel Velez (Local Church Pastor)  Subject: Letter to Ann Arbor Church

Dear Ann Arbor SDA Church Family:

I am by this email formally expressing to you, my Ann Arbor Church family, my heartfelt apology for letting you all down, and also [formally] submitting myself to the disciplining action of the church. This was never what I sought for myself, nor the cause I labored to uphold. I trust that you’d not only find it in your hearts to forgive me, but you’d also keep my family and I in your prayers.

As the church exercises this solemn responsibility, I pray that the Lord will use this sad experience to warn all of His children about the lurking dangers of temptation and to caution us to greater vigilance. Above all, I pray that the soul-searching that is taking place in connection with my resignation will spark or fuel the ongoing revival in the church.
The attached 3-page letter contains my announcement to my colleagues in ministry and my letter of resignation to the Michigan Conference Executive Committee. (The same information is available on our CAMPUS website:
http://campushope.com/resignation
). [See it also on the DRPIPIM.ORG site:
http://drpipim.org/resignation/147-resignation-letter.html
]

I genuinely appreciate your prayers on our behalf, and your respect of our privacy as we take some time for personal and family spiritual renewal.

Sincerely
Samuel Koranteng-Pipim

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APPENDIX III Reasons for Which Members Shall Be Disciplined

For those who may not be aware of church standards with respect to church discipline, I reproduce below a relevant section from our Church Manual [2010], (from chapter 7, “Discipline,” pp. 61-63):

“Among the grievous sins for which members shall be subject to church discipline are the following:

1. Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the fundamental beliefs of the church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.
2. Violation of the law of God, such as worship of idols, murder, stealing, profanity, gambling, Sabbathbreaking, and willful and habitual falsehood.
3. Violation of the seventh commandment of the law of God as it relates to the marriage institution, the Christian home, and biblical standards of moral conduct. 4. Sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, fornication, promiscuity, incest, homosexual practice, the production, use, or distribution of pornography, and other sexual perversions.
5. Remarriage of a divorced person, except of the spouse who has remained faithful to the marriage vow in a divorce for adultery or for sexual perversions.
6. Physical violence, including violence within the family.
7. Fraud or willful misrepresentation in business.
8. Disorderly conduct which brings reproach upon the church.
9. Adhering to or taking part in a divisive or disloyal movement or organization. (See p. 59)
10. Persistent refusal to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church.
11. The use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages.
12. The use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption.
13. The use, manufacture of illicit drugs or the misuse of, or trafficking in, narcotics or other drugs. Process of Discipline When grievous sins are involved, the church has two ways in which disciplinary measures must be taken:

1. By a vote of censure.
2. By a vote to remove from membership.
**Discipline by Censure---**
In cases where the offense is not considered by the church to be so serious as to warrant the extreme course of removing membership, the church may express its disapproval by a vote of censure.

Censure has two purposes: (1) To enable the church to express its disapproval of a grievous offense that has brought disgrace upon the cause of God and (2) to impress offending members with the need for a change of life and reformation of conduct and to give them a period of grace and probation during which to make those changes.

A vote of censure is for a stated period of from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 12 months. It terminates an erring member's election or appointment to all offices and removes the privilege of election while it is in effect. . . .

. . . Assessment should be made at the expiration of the period of censure to determine whether the disciplined members have changed course. If their conduct is satisfactory, they may then be considered in regular standing without further action and shall be notified that the censure has ended. If their conduct is not satisfactory, the church again should consider appropriate discipline. Any return to church office must be by election.

**Discipline by Removal from Membership---**
Removing individuals from membership in the church, the body of Christ, is the ultimate discipline that the church can administer. Only after the instruction given in this chapter has been followed, after counsel from the pastor or the conference when the pastor is unavailable, and after all possible efforts have been made to win and restore them to right paths, should an individual be removed from membership.

**No Additional Tests of Fellowship---**
No minister, congregation, or conference has authority to establish tests of fellowship. This authority rests with the General Conference Session. Anyone seeking to apply tests other than those herein set forth does not, therefore, properly represent the Church. (See 1T 207).

**Timeliness in the Disciplinary Process---**
- The church must care for the disciplinary process within a reasonable time and then communicate its decisions with kindness and promptness. Delay in administering discipline may increase the frustration and suffering of the member and church itself"

(Taken from *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* [2010], chapter 7, titled “Discipline,” pp. 61-63).
Inland: Adventist publication provocative, pushing boundaries

10:00 PM PDT on Saturday, July 2, 2011

By DAVID OLSON
The Press-Enterprise

In a recent opinion column in Adventist Today, a regular contributor blasted "religious zealots" who he said were interfering with academic freedom at Riverside's La Sierra University. He defended the right of faculty at the Seventh-day Adventist institution to counter official church teaching.

The first online comment in response to the essay defended Adventist orthodoxy and urged those who disagree with it to "get your own church!"

The exchange was typical for Adventist Today, a Riverside-based publication that regularly features provocative essays that sometimes push the boundaries of Adventist thought.

Much of the material is uncontroversial. But columns and blogs have argued against church teaching on the creation of Earth and called early church prophet Ellen G. White a plagiarist.

There are about a million Adventists in the United States and more than 16 million worldwide. The Inland area has long had one of the nation's largest concentrations of Adventists. It contains two of the denomination's 14 U.S. universities, La Sierra and Loma Linda universities, and its largest U.S. congregation, Loma Linda University Church.

The region also is seen as a center for progressive thought in a denomination that is theologically conservative on most matters.

In April, a church panel expressed concern that Adventist beliefs are not reflected strongly enough in classes at La Sierra, where Adventist Today rents a tiny office for the foundation that oversees the publication.

Ervin Taylor, a former editor and executive publisher of Adventist Today, said it's no coincidence the magazine is based in the Inland area.

The presence of two Adventist universities, along with an ethnically diverse Adventist population, has led to greater ideological mix of congregants in the Inland region than elsewhere, said Taylor, who lives in Loma Linda.

"Those with wider perspectives, especially academics, are concentrated here, and that created a more open climate of discussion and a broader and wider view of Adventism," said Taylor, a professor emeritus of anthropology at UC Riverside.
Taylor and four others from a religious-discussion class at Loma Linda University Church founded the magazine in 1993 as an alternative to the church’s official Adventist Review and to independent, Roseville, Calif.,-based Spectrum, which at the time was seen as targeted toward an academic audience. Adventist Today aimed for the general Adventist public.

The publication has a small editorial office in Oregon with two part-time employees. It relies mostly on volunteer editors and writers. About 20,000 people visit the publication’s website each month. The print circulation is 1,350.

Adventist Today has always relied on private donations, said James Walters, a cofounder and former editor and a Loma Linda University religion professor.

"Having an independent press is necessary to keep the humans leading the church honest, and to address issues that the house organ, Adventist Review, wouldn't write about," he said.

Shane Hilde, who founded a website that criticizes La Sierra’s teaching of creationism, agreed that Adventist Review needs independent alternatives.

But Hilde, of Beaumont, said some contributors to Adventist Today so regularly contradict church teaching -- including some of the 28 core "fundamental beliefs" -- that it's misleading for a publication with "Adventist" in its title to disseminate their ideas.

"If you are a Seventh-day Adventist who has a lot of divergent views, as far as integrity is concerned, it's better to join a different organization," he said. "If you choose to stay in the organization, it's better not to promote those views under the Adventist name."

Garrett Caldwell, a church spokesman, said the church does not have an official view of Adventist Today. But he said the Adventist denomination has a long history of valuing freedom of expression.

"Merely questioning a fundamental belief is not means for disqualification or disfellowship (disaffiliation) of someone," he said.

Taylor, a self-described liberal Adventist, said traditionalists don't have a monopoly on Adventism.

"It's not their church," Taylor said. "It's everyone's church. It's a we-us thing, not us-versus-them. In my view, the church is a community, a family, and like members of any family, you have different views."

Taylor said he subscribes to several key beliefs of the church, including a Saturday Sabbath and the belief that hell is not eternal punishment but annihilation before a person ceases to exist.

Adventist Today often is viewed as liberal, but a 2000 survey the publication conducted among its readers found that most defined themselves as middle-of-the-road. That probably still holds, Taylor said.

Nathan Schilt, a Colton man who heads Adventist Today's editorial committee, said the publication always has had writers from across the theological spectrum. He said that, because the current editor, the Rev. J. David Newman, and his predecessor are more moderate than previous ones, there are more traditionalist and moderate views in the publication today.

Newman said he believes "the truth is always unfolding," and he strives to promote respectful dialogue.

"So often," he said, "conservatives look down at liberals and liberals look down at conservatives without saying, 'What can we learn from each other?' "

Reach David Olson at 951-368-9462 or dolson@PE.com
Megacities: Love ‘em or Leave ‘em?

Submitted Jul 1, 2011
By Lawrence Downing

The headline on cover of the May 9, 2011 FORBES (FORBES.com) reads “MEGACITIES THE WORLD’S GREATEST OPPORTUNITY.” In three articles FORBES reports on the dramatic population shifts taking place around the world, examines the impact the megacities have on the business world. The articles describe how the people in the megacities have adapted to their situation and the how slum dwellers have learned not only to survive, but at times, thrive. The message in these articles is clear: The business world ignores the megacities to their peril. People, the authors found, have an astounding ability to adapt. Some of the world’s wealthiest people had their beginnings in slums. As I read the articles it became clear that the observations and conclusions set forth in the three articles are instructive to contemporary religious organizations.

SLUMDOGS Millions by Raquel Laneri (p. 100) lists the 21 megacities of 10 million people or more. There will be an additional 8 megacities by 2025. New York City and Los Angeles are the two US cities that meet the population criteria. As one who has for the past 14 years been working in one of these two megacities (Los Angeles) I read with interest the findings. Important to note: for the first time in history the majority of people live in cities! In the second article, “New Lands of Opportunity “by Edward Glaesser ( pp. 102) the author informs the reader that “…there is a one-in-eight chance that you are living in a slum in the developing world, desperately — often successfully — trying to improve your lot.” Glaesser’s examples of how people scrape by and at times succeed, illustrate the creative endeavors one finds among those who live in the slums. The third article, “Megaslums Salvation or Sinkhole?,” written by Helen Coster with Daniel Fisher and Michael Noer (p. 114), is a roundtable discussion via the internet among FORBES staff, contributors and readers from around the world, to the megacity data.

In the article, participants comment on the triumphalism surrounding slums and megacities, describe how people adapt and survive in the city, debate whether large cities are desirable or necessary, and define challenges such as infrastructure and crime that are part of highly urbanized centers. Participants are of the opinion that it is unrealistic to look for top-down government action to solve megacity problems. If those who live in the slums are to see their life improve, they will have to take responsibility for their own future and respond to opportunities that arise.

In a typical slum one will find community leaders, idle youth, entrepreneurs, company men, land barons, thieves, drunks, housewives, street jesters, and educated professionals. Often, an individual may be one or more of these at the same time. So what is the future of these megacities? When the oppressive conditions become too debilitating, people find a better place, often that place is an urban fringe or a less populated city. The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, in its 2011 research effort, found that since 1990 “‘built-up area densities’” have been dropping by roughly 2% a year, including in the developing world. The question the writer poses is this: “Rather than foster an urban form that demands heroic survival, perhaps we should focus on ways to create cities that offer a more healthful and even pleasant life for their citizens.” Consider this question: Is not providing this kind of service right up the Adventist alley? Health and pleasant life, a natural fit for what we count important! If we directed a significant portion of the resources now budgeted to traditional evangelistic methods, that have become less and less effective in the urban centers, and use those resources to establish
health and happy life programs, who knows, someone might listen. Even better, think of the possibilities if we trained people who live in megacities to be the ones who work with those they know and live to teach others how to live a healthy life and how to have true happiness.

The White Memorial Medical Center, a major health-care facility, is located in one of the most economically depressed areas of Los Angeles. At the June 2011 White Memorial Medical Staff Meeting Dr. Hans Diehl, Director of Lifestyle Medicine Institute at Loma Linda, CA and founder of CHIPS (Coronary Health Improvement Project) was the guest speaker. In his lecture, Dr. Diehl explained how it is possible through diet alone to decrease cholesterol, lose weight, reverse artherosclerosis and Type II Diabetes, and achieve other beneficial health outcomes.

The next day the conversation round the tables in the doctor’s dinning room was about the lecture the physicians had heard the previous day. The docs were enthralled by the presentation. One person said, “This was the most interesting lecture I’ve ever heard here at the hospital.” The person pointed to her plate and said, “Look, vegetables!” Think about it, if physicians can be charged up over a health lecture what response might one expect from urbanites with only elementary knowledge about health and diet should a trained person introduce them to a better way of life? We Adventists are experts on healthy living. We may struggle a bit when it comes to sharing how to have a happy life, but half the equation is better than none! The information is available. Trainers are ready to go and there are people who will benefit from what we have to share. So what’s stopping us? Readers, you know the answers better than I.

Kevin Riley

We started as a rural based church, and I suspect most members are happy to stay that way. Very few rural or small town churches are growing, yet there still seems to be an assumption that these are the 'real' churches, and that it is in those churches that 'real' Adventism thrives. While we continue to view church life this way, and see urban areas as intrinsically 'bad', I don't expect that we will have much impact on cities. Large suburban and urban churches are the ones with the most potential to impact society, but they often seem to be regarded with a degree of suspicion. There seems to be a fear that large city churches are likely to be dens of liberalism. There is much that we could do, but are we likely to be able to persuade anyone that we should do so?

Elaine Nelson

To be effective in large cities, Adventism must radically shift the focus from evangelistic seminars to health clinics, teaching better food choices, and flu clinics, etc. Serving their needs which usually is not for a new religion, but practical living advice.

William Noel

Elaine,

Please allow me to expand your suggested approach a bit because it reflects a very traditional Adventist view where the number of our approaches to the public is limited to preaching,
teaching and health ministries. The first three years of my ministerial experience were spent in a health ministry in New York City. My wife and I have many fond memories of watching God at work. Still, one of the big lessons I see looking back on that experience was what a small portion of the millions around us we touched in ways that directed their attention to God.

As much as Jesus became our savior, he also was our role model whom we should be following in our outreach. He went to people where they were. He mingled with them as a common person, as one who desired their good. Then he performed miracles. It was only then that he could invite them to follow him. But there's something profound that gets overlooked in the stories when we move from the miracle to the teaching and call to follow. What we skip past is why the miracle was more than merely an amazing demonstration. It demonstrated the power of a loving God in action. It was also a very personal event because God was taking specific action to improve the recipient's life in a way that they could not enjoy from any other source. The focus of my ministry is on doing things that improve the lives of individuals and families and deliver an improvement that is outside their resources or ability to provide for themselves. I am continually amazed watching what God does when we work in this way.

So, as you consider ministry possibilities, I want to encourage you to not let a limited concept of how God want us to work prevent you from discovering new ways to minister. Let the Holy Spirit expand your concept of what can be an effective ministry.

Elaine Nelson

William Noel,

That is my idea of living God's truth: only when it can be demonstrated in an individual's life by offering some benefit either physically, mentally, or spiritually, is that the Gospel in action.

Trevor Hammond

Is it ok to say love 'em AND leave 'em...?

T

Mark Bauer

What valid reason is there to leave them? Certainly not the example set in the Gospels. I can think of no reason to abandon the places where most of the people are.

Trevor Hammond

Hey, Mark Bauer, Sir
Well, one VALID reason is the undisputed BAD Influence of CITY LIFE...

-----

While I'm at it - here's Ellen White's take on it as well:
Maranatha, Page 184
Chapter 176—Work the Cities from Outposts

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 2 Corinthians 6:17.

As God’s commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them.

As far as possible, our institutions should be located away from the cities.... It is not God’s will that His people shall settle in the cities, where there is constant turmoil and confusion. Their children should be spared this; for the whole system is demoralized by the hurry and rush and noise. The Lord desires His people to move into the country, where they can settle on the land, and raise their own fruit and vegetables, and where their children can be brought in direct contact with the works of God in nature. Take your families away from the cities is my message.

The truth must be spoken, whether men will hear, or whether men will forbear. The cities are filled with temptation. We should plan our work in such a way as to keep our young people as far as possible from this contamination.

The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, "Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God’s people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth."

When iniquity abounds in a nation, there is always to be heard some voice giving warning and instruction, as the voice of Lot was heard in Sodom. Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city. Enoch walked with God, and yet he did not live in the midst of any city polluted with every kind of violence and wickedness, as did Lot in Sodom.

He [Enoch] did not make his abode with the wicked.... He placed himself and his family where the atmosphere would be as pure as possible. Then at times he went forth to the inhabitants of the world with his God-given message.... After proclaiming his message, he always took back with him to his place of retirement some who had received the warning."

T

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago Reply

When one has not valid position but merely resorts to stringing together EGW's quotations, the scroll button becomes a necessary tool. Thw small towns and countryside are not immune to all the
vices that man has discovered. There is no "safe place" in today's world that can be free from sin and vice. We should minister to those most needy, not expect them to come to us.

Kevin Riley 1 week ago Reply

Those who believe that cities are so much better than small towns when it comes to morality seem to be people who did not grow up in small towns. There is nothing that happens in big cities that does not also happen in small towns. Small towns just tend to be better at keeping such things out of the newspapers. The only way we can avoid the immorality of the surrounding culture is to remove ourselves from it completely - which does not leave much room for us to be witness to our neighbors.

Edwin A. Schwisow 1 week ago Reply

Our Anglo preference for the "Great Leader" over and above the "ordained culture" has created an American Adventism that emphasizes the individual over the group, the great individual decision over the group participatory consensus. This is not an effective paradigm for reaching the "socialistic" cities with the gospel.

For various demographic reasons, the Hispanic culture seems to possess this insight more naturally than the traditional American Anglo viewpoint.

As the Hispanics increasingly dominate North American Adventism, our cities WILL be reached by force of demographics. But we will have a lot of catching-up to do. Frankly, to succeed, outreach in the cities must be more socially based, more persistent, more multi-sourced, and more high-maintenance of new disciples than what we practice in small, homogenous communities. And, oh, the outreach will be more effective if done with, by, and in small-group settings. The days of large-scale stadium, Billy Graham-style evangelistic meetings, are long gone in the cities—at least in terms of return-on-dollar.

Lawrence G. Downing 6 days ago Reply

You're correct, Ed. The impact Hispanic Adventist have on the metro areas is significant. Here in Orange County California the Spanish-speaking churches and their pastors coordinate their resources to produce health and social programs. They do have major events at Crystal Cathedral, but the presentations are initiated from the parish, not church bureaucrats.

Those who insist that country life offers a morally superior or "safer" environment might check the statistics that compare rural with urban life. Country folk participate in the same activities as city dwellers. Examine the evidence. Violent crime, drug use, sexual assault are not significantly different in rural as compared to urban. Rural life can be more dangerous than city life. Deaths per 100,000 are fewer in urban areas than rural. Farming is a dangerous business. Medical care is closer and of higher quality in urban than rural areas. In urban areas people live closer one to the other and people do take care of their neighbors.
Your final point, the importance of building relationships, hits the mark. Adventists have too long practiced hit-and-run evangelism rather than a live with, listen, and learn approach. Thankfully, there are people who do commit themselves to the urban centers. May their numbers increase! And for the record, those who still think that those who live in the urban centers are the poor and homeless are way behind the times. The inner core of Los Angeles, one of two megacities in America, has undergone a transformation that will continue in the decades ahead. Young professionals have moved back into the cities, and Los Angeles is not unique in this transformation. Thousands of well-educated, affluent men and women occupy the new apartments, fill the up-scale restaurants, attend the symphonies and play houses. There are a few churches that have responded to this demographic shift, but Adventists are not among that group. We're still on the outside looking in and wondering why the world is passing us by. Catch up? Perhaps. But unlikely if we continue business as usual.

Trevor Hammond

Was Lot at a better advantage when he chose Sodom? He seemed to think so... He suffered great loss in the end: his wife, his daughters and his descendents. At once stage in the account he even offers his daughters to appease the perversion of the city dwellers. Those within the cities, from a ‘secular’ perspective, with all the safety, the better healthcare, the educated and the affluent, are still at high risk of losing their children and youth and themselves to the ‘seduction’ of sinful worldly living. This migration to the cities even in the third world is a reality we face. The ‘City Lights’ may seem brighter and attractive but what will be the end thereof?

Yeah thank God for the many who preach the gospel in the cities and live in them. May God keep them strong and faithful and bless their children and families and churches......but there will come a time when they too will have to consider leaving to the suburbs or maybe to the countryside as perversion, violence and wickedness are drastically increased.

Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God. [Heb 11:10]NLT

T

Jack Hoehn

Was Jesus at a great disadvantage when His Father chose the notorious city of Nazareth as his childhood home? Was it an error for the boy to be lost in the megacenter of Jerusalem on his own for days at a time? Lot didn't move to Sodom to bless the Sodomites. He moved there because the shopping was great. Adventists who intentionally move to megacities to bless the inhabitants won't turn into pillars of salt. Those whose greatest concern is not to soil their own garments, are those who moved over to the other side of the road when confronting the world's needs.
Kevin Riley

And what of the horror of the saints when they discover that the home God has prepared for them is a city - the biggest ever known. Cities have at times been worse than the rural areas to live in. Ellen White's time was one of those times. The final years of earth's history could well be another. But the idea that cities always represent evil just doesn't work if you read the Bible. It's also hard to accept if you grew up in a small rural town and know what goes on in such places.

Posting as

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On June 10, 2011, three La Sierra University (LSU) faculty members and a board member resigned. News of their resignations set off a storm of rumor and speculation.

The stranger-than-fiction saga came to the attention of the general Adventist public with a short announcement by the LSU administration. Four individuals — Jeff Kaatz, Vice President for university advancement; Jim Beach, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; Gary Bradley part-time contract biology professor; and Lenny Darnell, member of the Board of Trustees — had been asked to resign. The announcement specifically stated the resignations were not connected to the on-going controversy over the teaching of evolutionary biology at LSU, a claim that was initially doubted by many.

Central to the resignations was a digital recording made by one of the four affected individuals. Within hours of the announcement, *Adventist Today* received a copy of the recording from an anonymous source.

The first part of the recording was of a meeting, held in a public hall on campus and called by North American Division leaders. This was to discuss the likelihood the church’s accrediting association would probably not re-certify the university for a maximum five-year term. There was a perception, reported the leaders, that LSU was ‘deviating’ from standards of instruction expected of Adventist universities. It was clear from the recording, the word ‘deviating’ was generally held to refer to LSU’s approaches to teaching biology.

Prominent speakers at the meeting were Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division (NAD), and Larry Blackmer, NAD vice president for education.

After the meeting, the digital recording device/telephone, operated on his person by one of the four men, was left running. This appeared unintentional while the four men went to a private home to discuss the meeting and watch a basketball playoff game between the Lakers and the Dallas Mavericks.

Apparently unaware the follow-up discussion was part of the recording, one of the men forwarded a copy of the recording to various individuals, so they could hear the meeting with the church officials. This digital file was forwarded by someone else to the General Conference. When Larry Blackmer listened to the recording he discovered it contained more that just the meeting at which he had been a principal presenter. After listening to the entire recording, including the conversation during the basketball game which contained some rather inflammatory rhetoric, he had the recording transcribed and sent a copy of this to the leadership of LSU. In light of that transcript, the four men were asked to resign, and they complied.

What was so inflammatory about the recording that the men agreed to resign?

The primary area of discussion at the private home was the apparent impasse between the academic
accreditors and the university. The men believed this was less to do with LSU itself than with the need for the church to come to terms with scientific evidence that seems to contradict official Adventist doctrine.

This might be controversial, but would probably not have cost them their jobs. The men did not, however, limit themselves to a discussion of the issues. They made very unflattering personal references to Dan Jackson, the NAD president, calling him a ‘eunuch’ with little power in the church. They described the division office as, “the weakest unit in the whole church.” The recording includes disparaging remarks about those who fail to adequately plan ahead because of their earnest belief that Jesus will come very, very soon. One voice notes that General Conference President Ted Wilson is such a man. The men also criticized Randall Wisbey, LSU president, stating he is, “a pastor first and a church administrator second.”

While many an Adventist employee has voiced unflattering opinions about various church leaders in private, offering such baldly stated criticism to the world (albeit inadvertently), made strong disciplinary action unavoidable. Further, if these personal remarks were not enough to compel the resignations, there was additional incriminating content. The men casually referred to their drinks as ‘brew’ and profanity is heard occasionally.

Sources have told Adventist Today that each of the four men independently confirmed he had been drinking alcoholic beverages during the private-home discussion (Use of alcoholic beverages by faculty, staff, and students at LSU is prohibited and, according to the latest edition of the faculty handbook, may result in expulsion or termination). The resignations were asked for and given.

Adventist Today has also learned the gentlemen involved were offered an opportunity to avail themselves of the grievance process rather than resign. In addition, the LSU Board received and considered the Faculty Senate’s request for the resignations to be rejected. Following a robust discussion this was not accepted and the board ratified the requests for the resignations made on June 10.

The resignations of the two vice presidents apply only to their administrative duties, not to their tenured teaching status at the university. Dr. Bradley, a semi-retired contract teacher, had no tenure and Darnell’s resignation applies to his position on the Board of Trustees.

The specific and immediate causes of the resignations appear not to be directly related to the controversy over the teaching of evolutionary biology at LSU. However, as one commentator suggested, these events might be perceived as representing collateral damage caused by being caught in the crossfire over that issue.

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**Bob Pickle** 1 week ago **Reply**

If alcohol was a reason for the resignations, and if "Use of alcoholic beverages ... may result in expulsion or termination," why are Kaatz and Beach still employees at LSU? Seems a little contradictory.

**Bill Cork** 1 week ago **Reply**


"What was so inflammatory about the recording that the men agreed to resign?"

I don't know. How about functioning as a news organization and publish the transcript so that we can judge for ourselves?

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago  Reply

The SDA administration should be trembling in their boots: anyone could "plant" a mike in one of their private conference rooms and record some most interesting conversations.

Thoughtful 1 week ago  Reply

Since I am not a lawyer my confusion simply manifests my ignorance, but the following questions immediately come into my mind:

Does California law apply outside of California? Can an individual living in Maryland and listening to the tapes or reading the transcripts in Maryland be sued for violating California law? As a non-lawyer that seems a bit strange, if it is true.

What makes a conversation with 4 people privileged? Is it the fact that it occurs in the home? How big a group does it take before this is a "public" meeting that is unprotected? Would 5 or 6 or 12 or 20 make it a public non-protected event? If the public meeting wasn't protected because there was no hint of privileged information on the tape, is a group of 4 protected even without hint of saying they were engaged in a private conversation?

When this conversation was sent to a journal, the journal (and I assume this would also be true of journalistic blog sites) has protections. Does the publication of it make it no longer privileged? Does sending it out make it no longer privileged—you addressed this but I have the sense that different lawyers would have other arguments.

If it is sent out to a number of people, does that make it no longer protected and the one who sent it the only one in danger of being found in violation of the law?

Can a tenured professor be terminated for any cause whatever? Would the tenured professor be able to teach even if convicted of robbery, embezzlement, rape? Would the use of alcohol, in obvious violation of the school principles and rules, be such that a tenured professor could be removed for this?

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago  Reply

The four accused should not have been so hasty in signing any statement. This would have caused better minds to contemplate the fallout. No contract or statement should ever be signed "on the spot." In this action, there was error all around.
Nailed to the Cross

Submitted Jul 1, 2011
By Preston Foster

All of my life, I have heard and accepted the Adventist teaching that, at the time of Christ’s death, it was only the ceremonial law that was nailed to the cross. In contrast to most Protestant faiths who claim the entire law was nailed to the cross, Adventists teach that it was the ceremonial laws given to Moses that ended there.

Recently, I heard a sermon that gave me pause and reason to reconsider and investigate the biblical basis of this teaching.

The sermon, by Joseph Prince, a self-proclaimed “radical grace” preacher, focused on Galatians 4. The text re-tells the story of Sarah and Hagar. As you know, Sarah was the wife of Abraham. Hagar was Sarah’s handmaid. Discouraged that she could not conceive, Sarah took matters into her own hands. Sarah, lacking faith, encouraged Abraham to sleep with Hagar, so that he could have a child through her.

So he did. Ishmael was born to Hagar.

God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of a nation. Later, miraculously, Abraham and Sarah conceived the child of the promise: Isaac (“the heir”). Ishmael was born of a woman in bondage, a result of Sarah taking things into her own hands (“the flesh”). Isaac was born of a free woman, as a result of Divine Intervention (“the promise”).

The apostle Paul declares this story to be an allegory for the two covenants: law and grace. Hagar and Ishmael represent law; Sarah and Isaac represent grace. Notably, Galatians 4:24 explicitly states that the law that is being referenced here is the law from Mount Sinai (the moral law, not the ceremonial one).

This is a very big deal.

About this time, all of my Adventist training rushed my frontal lobe. You mean there is no law? There is no work for me to do regarding the law?

The sermon went on to point out that there was trouble in the house of Abraham (the house of faith). Those who hold to the law (Ishmael) will persecute those who, by the promise, inherit (Isaac) the freedom in grace (Galatians 4:29). Well, I know that’s true!
Of course, sin is still sin. There is a law. Creation and the law identify the existence and sovereignty of God. In Christ, we simply are not under that law (Galatians 6:18), but under grace. We put on the righteousness of Christ who fulfilled the law by paying the penalty for all who accept his gift.

I believe what Christ said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” (John 14:15). Clearly, there are things that Christ expects us to do that are related to salvation (Matthew 7:21). Paul, the original radical grace preacher, retained a consciousness of sin (Romans 6:1, Galatians 6:19-21).

It is also very clear to me that there is no working your way to heaven -- even by keeping the 10 commandments (too late, you’ve already broken them!). We are saved only by the blood of Christ and His grace.

Like in another column, I am willing to be instructed here, as long as that instruction includes light, not judgment.

To me, it now makes obvious sense that the moral law was nailed to the cross. It was not made void at the cross. The cross PAID for the breaking of the law. “The WAGES of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). The law was nailed to the cross, marked “PAID IN FULL!” Did Christ die to free us from ceremony only? No, he died to pay for our sins -- which are defined by the moral law.

What am I missing? While you consider this question, please consider another one: what are WE missing?

Thoughtful 1 week ago

Preston, First, it is not correct to say that Adventist's teach "it was ONLY the ceremonial law that was nailed to the cross." All the Adventist's I know teach that it was CHRIST that was nailed to the cross. It was the Author of the law, both moral and ceremonial, all of it, that was slain. That is a fundamental basis for understanding Paul.

It was the hatred of Christ and His law that motivated the cries for His death and hung Him to the tree, with the curse of God on Him. That is what sin does to us. If possible we would hurl God from His throne and place ourselves on the throne.

The law condemns my sins. Justice demands my punishment. On the cross the demands of the moral law were neither changed nor ignored they were fully paid. On the cross the moral law's condemnation of my sins was taken away, because of Christ's sacrifice. Furthermore, the ceremonial law, which had grown old and no longer was revealing Christ and had become a way of concealing Him was no longer necessary and was discarded. So Christ nailed to the cross, by that one act confirmed both the promise of the old covenant and the importance of the new covenant.

The moral law, intrinsic with creation, and explicitly spoken and written at Sinai was made honorable. The outward ceremonies first given to Adam after sin and then amplified at Sinai were made plain. The shadow had ceased to be a means of pointing to the real and had become an end in itself by the Jews. The Jews, like Hagar and Ishmael had thought they were the promised seed. They rejected Christ who, like Isaac was the real promised seed.
Sin makes us hate good and truth and righteousness and love evil and error and iniquity. We are incapable of being in harmony with the law of God. And we will absolutely persecute those who love the Lord and His law. But such is the confusion that sin brings to our mind, that we will be convinced that we are persecuted. Satan believes He was mistreated by God. King Saul believed he was persecuted by David. The great persecutors and inquisitors of the 1260 years believed they were being persecuted. Hagar, Ishmael, Cain, all thought they were the victims.

Elaine Nelson

Well, well! Someone is just now reading Galatians with new glasses! Congratulations! If one spent more time there instead of the selected SDA verses about the law, things would become more clear.

In the entire Hebrew system there was never a division into moral or ceremonial laws. This is evidenced by Jesus who was castigated for breaking the law and nothing was mentioned about their being two, distinct laws. This is a ploy used largely by Adventists in order to support the sabbath. What could be another reason?

"Before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law....Therefore the Law has become our tutor to LEAD US to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus....Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through GOD....It was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery....The is not of faith, on the contrary, he who practices them shall live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." (Paul's epistles to the Galatians.)

This writer however, returns again to the theory that "the moral law, intrinsic with creation" (Where is that Bible statement?). There was no written law until Sinai nor is there a record of anyone prior to that time who knew of, or was called to obey a written law.

The Sinaitic Law no longer is our guide: Jesus is the exemplification of the Father, not the Law. Jesus was accused of breaking the Law and it was Paul who could not have been more clear that the Law (Jewish Law) was no longer the operative rule of our life but faith in Jesus. Just as in a good marriage, there can be no written lists of behavior, but a willingness to please the mate, that is how Jesus looks at us: we have no check list of do's and don'ts but we have Jesus as our perfect model. The law was not perfect, it was given to the Jews when they were illiterate, former slaves. Christians live under a different order: they are no longer slaves, but free and Paul said for freedom, Christ has set us free. What, if not the Law, have we been set free from?

What is meant by the "commandments" in John's statement "If you love me you will keep my commandments"? A few verses earlier (John 13:34-35), he plainly says: "I give you a NEW commandment: love one another just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples." How is that referring back to the Ten Words in the OT? Jesus came to give us a NEW
COMMANDMENT, and then we want to return to Sinai??

Preston Foster

Thoughtful,

Apparently, I know some other Adventists than you, not a few in number. Clearly and thankfully for us, Christ was nailed to the cross. The debate that I'm referencing it the column's title, is taken from this familiar verse:

King James Bible
"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Colossians 2:14

In debating what this verse means, in contrast to most other Protestant interpretations, time and time again, I have heard the "ceremonial/moral" dissection from Adventist teachers, ministers, and bible workers.

The point about Hagar and Ishmael in Galatians 4 seems to me to be less about their momentary victimhood of Hagar and Ishmel and more about, in the context of the allegory re: law vs. grace, how that resentment manifested itself against the inheritors of the promise (grace).

It has been my experience, particularly within the Adventist mileu, that strong message of grace is usually met with instruction to "work" and "keep the law" and a warnings against over-dependence on Grace.

Yes, there is antinomianism -- an exclusive dependence on grace. But Adventism generally tends to bend toward the other extreme.

Galatians 4:21 introduces the Hagar/Sarah law/grace allegory this way, "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? An objective reading of Galatians 4 and 5 would leave most readers with the clear impression that grace is superior to the law.

That notion is, I believe, what is being avoided in the ceremonial/moral law teaching regarding what was retired and paid for at the cross.

Preston Foster

Dear Elaine,

Yes, new glasses do provide better vision. Although the verses were underlined and bracketed in my Bible (not the first time the chapter was read), somehow the understanding escaped me. No doubt, I was predisposed to understand something else, thus the article.
Your reference regarding "this writer" returning to theory of "the moral law, intrinsic with creation" is lost on me. That is nothing I've posited here. What I said was that creation and the law were evidence of God's existence and sovereignty.

It seems to me that the 10 commandments define what sin is, still (" Sin is the transgression of the law," 1 John 3:4). My view is that the law is was not voided at the cross. The cross provides payment for sin ("the gift of God . . "). Grace, for me, means we cannot work to earn that gift (unless that "work" is the work of acceptance). If we do not accept that payment, our sins will eternally separate us from The Father.

Preston Foster

Elaine,

In short, (my view) we are no longer under the law simply because Jesus died for us. We are no longer under the law (and its penalties) if we are in Jesus -- who died for us.

Kevin Riley

I thought the 'handwriting in ordinances' was the record of our sin, neither the moral nor the ceremonial law. Like Elaine, I do not believe you can find any evidence for such a division in the Bible. You can find slight evidence for a distinction between the 10 commandments and the rest, but while we teach that the 10 Commandments = the moral law, we certainly broaden that when we preach against sin.

But I also agree that we are not under the law if we are in Christ, but instead are led by the Spirit. Galatians seems to be pretty clear on that. But I have yet to be convinced that the Holy Spirit who inspired Moses to write the law will lead us contrary to that law.

pagophilus

Preston, Kevin and others, the "handwriting of ordinances which was against us" in Colossians 2:14 is clearly the ceremonial law if we look at Deuteronomy 31:24-27. If you remember, the ten commandments were written by God on stone and were put inside the ark, the rest of the law (the ceremonial law) was written by Moses in a book and was put beside the ark.

Exodus 31

24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book (the ceremonial law because it's in a book- pagophilus's comment), when they were finished, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: 26 “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;
Note that the ceremonial law was a "witness against us".

That's about the clearest explanation of Colossians 2:14 I have seen.

pagophilus 1 week ago  Reply

The other thing is, if the law really was nailed to the cross, please explain why Jesus said "if you love me keep my commandments". He didn't say "until I die, then you don't have to keep them any more". And please explain why so many other New Testament writers keep exhorting us to keep the ten commandments. For example, James 2:8-12. He mentions the commandments. If they were nailed to the cross, why bother still mentioning them. The reality is, the minimisation of the commandments is done in order to do away with the Sabbath, but to do away with that you have to do away with the other 9 as well, but they don't think through the consequences of that. I may as well ask if the law is done away with, may I go and rape your wife and then kill her? If not, please tell me why not, since the commandments were nailed to the cross and done away with.

Preston, I'd suggest that you won't get much enlightenment listening to Joseph Prince. In fact, I'd suggest that your understanding of the Bible will be seriously corrupted by going to spiritual Babylon to hear the Word explained. God says "come out of her my people", not "go visit her to hear my Word explained more clearly".

Thoughtful 1 week ago  Reply

In Galatians 4 Hagar and Ishmael are used to illustrate the Jewish nation. Just as Hagar and Ishmael thought they were the specially blessed and resented, rejected, and persecuted Isaac, the true seed, the Jewish nation thought they were the specially blessed and favored of heaven and resented, rejected, and persecuted Jesus, the true seed of the woman. But it also represents all who like Hagar have faith in themselves and trust in themselves for salvation. Like Israel at Sinai who sincerely, but ignorantly declared, "All that the Lord sayeth, we will do" they hear God's commands and set about to "obey" them in their own strength. Within a few weeks they were worshipping the golden calf. All our righteousnesses are filthy rags. We can produce only Ishmaels.

How opposite from Hagar is Mary. "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord, be it according to thy word." Instead of going about in our strength to accomplish God's will, we surrender to God all that we have and all that we are and trust Him to take us and use us.

By the way, Galatians 4 and Col 2:14 are being confused in your post. The two actually are speaking of different things. Galatians 4 includes both the ceremonial and moral law (though primarily moral), Col 2:14 is speaking of the covenant law where the Israelites solemnly promised to obey. And since they could not obey, it was a witness against them. Frankly, in my experience virtually everyone has to go through an old covenant experience and learn the weakness of the flesh before they can appreciate and experience the new covenant. Almost everyone thinks they are stronger and better than they are and the old covenant experience teaches them like Hagar taught Abraham of the inability of our plans and ideas and strength to fulfill the promises of God.
I can see how one would try and use Galatians 4 to draw the aforementioned conclusions. But a proper understanding of Colossians 2:14 and its context clears this up nicely.

The "ordinences" is (dogmasin in Greek), which means a bond or debt. Preston has it right when he identifies that the wages / debt of sin is death. In addition the "handwriting" (cheiographon) enables us to identify that which was "against us." The ceremonial law was never against us. The moral law and the ceremonial law together were the means by which the Lord taught how, in interactive form (the sanctuary services), law and grace work together for the salvation of man. So whatever it was that was against us, that was nailed to the cross. The handwriting of ordnence, the bond / debt was the death warrant mandated by the law transgressed. So when our sins were nailed to the cross along with Christ at His crucifixion, the death warrant was satisfied, and therefore no longer in force.

The law of God now teaches us how to walk in freedom, and the ceremonial law continues to illustrate the interactive components of how to walk with Christ thru the sanctuary into the very presence of God by faith. Historically, Adventists have struggled with the proper balance of law & grace because of the documented arguments of which law was nailed to the cross, moral or ceremonial. But as the hymn says, "my sin, not in part but the whole, was nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul... It is well with my soul."

Peace

I still see it as more logical that it was the bill of our debts which was wiped clean and nailed to the cross. I was taught that that was what 'cheiographein' means - a bill of debt. I do not believe it was the law itself which was nailed to the cross. I do believe that Christians are not under the law now that Christ has come - Galatians makes that clear - but that is a different thing to the law being abolished. Although, it would all be clearer if Paul had not said both that the law was abolished, and that it is not. I don't see the division of the law into moral and ceremonial sections solving any of the problems with the law in the NT.

Thank you, all, for great feedback, thoughts, and enlightenment. Some brief thoughts:

pagophilus,

What one considers to be spiritual Babylon is debatable. Here, Prince was preaching directly from the Bible and, in my opinion, offering a conservative interpretation of Paul's written word. It was Paul who said that this story was an allegory for law and grace. It was Paul who specified to Sinai
as his point of reference, regarding the law. And it was Paul who pointed to the superiority of grace over law. At any rate, millions of others, whom we (Adventists) might influence, are listening to this preaching. It would be difficult to credibly refute errors (assuming there are any), if what is said is never heard, in context. Personally, I've always felt that, if I'm confident of my ground, opposing ideas are welcomed (and easily refuted).

Elaine is, no doubt, ready to debate you as to which commandments are being reference where (I have no dispute with your position). I look forward to following that debate.

Thoughtful,

The references to both Colossians 2:14 and Galatians 4 are purposeful. The idiom, "nailed to the cross" (the Colossians reference) is the locus the debate around what, if anything, was done away with at the cross. The Sinai reference in Galatians seems, at least to me, to undercut the notion, promoted by some in the Adventist community, that only part of the law was "nailed to the cross." I agree with your observation on old and new covenant experiences. Not only are old covenant works not salvific, they are frustratingly inadequate.

laffal,

You are helpful to me in understanding many things. The "balance of law and grace" implies equality between the two. Do you see grace as being superior to the law (or, better, how do you view that "balance")?

Kevin,

The notion of a bill of debt resonates with me (e.g. "wages of sin"). Can you, please, specify a reference for Paul saying the law was abolished?

I agree. The ceremonial/moral dissection, though distinct, always seemed to me to be a rationalization (in the context of explaining what was nailed to the cross). Finding a (NT) biblical basis for that explanation is "a challenge."

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pagophilus 1 week ago  Reply

Kevin,

I have heard that explanation of the "cheirographein" before. And I agree that it is possible to reach a valid conclusion that way. Our local minister spoke on this in a sermon recently.

However, the first principle in interpreting the Bible is to let the Bible interpret itself, ie look for other passages that speak of the same thing. Clearly Deuteronomy 31:24-27 is the place to start looking, for it speaks of the "handwriting" (Moses' book) of "ordinances" (laws) which is a witness
against us (both this passage and the one in Colossians use that term). It is therefore clear, letting
the Bible interpret itself, that Colossians 2:14 is speaking of Moses’ handwritten law, the
Ceremonial law.

Put that together with Galatians 3:19, and things start to become clearer. A law was added because
transgression. What is sin? transgression of the law. So a law was added because of transgression
of a law. The ceremonial law was added because of transgression of the moral law (10
commandments), to point Israel to the remedy for sin.

Preston,

Elaine can challenge my position all she likes. I’m not afraid of her, as her sole purpose (similar to
the current Australian opposition leader Tony Abbott - Kevin will understand this one) is to
oppose, not to offer a valid alternative position. Plus, she often uses discredited and easily
discreditable arguments (such as documentary hypothesis), clutching at straws to support her
opposition to Adventism. If she can challenge the above position (using the Bible), I’d be happy to
see it.

As for anyone who claims the law was abolished, how do they explain Romans 3:31 - do we
nullify (make void) the law by faith? No, we uphold (establish) the law.

As for my comment on spiritual Babylon, I agree sometimes it is necessary to listen/read what
comes from there for the purpose of critique or providing answers, however you better be solidly
grounded not to be swayed from your position. If listening to the messages causes you to write this
column, challenging or making uncertain the Adventist understanding of the ceremonial law, it is
dangerous to go there. I have seen great minds losing their faith because of visiting AOG churches
(initially because of their preference for a livelier worship service). Then they question Ellen
White, then they compromise on the Sabbath, then they question the inerrancy of the Bible. And
finally, religion becomes almost entirely emotional to them and they become like a reed blowing in
the wind, easily led by the "spirit". Eg "God showed me that I have to learn to drink coffee."
"Which god?" would be the obvious response to that statement.

Ellen White wrote on the topic: "God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without
being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the
people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us,
and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power
of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness." From
somewhere in Early Writings.

Kevin Riley

I cannot see how we can possibly believe a text in Genesis is better at 'explaining' what a Greek
word meant than actual Greek writings from the same time. When people in Paul's day heard
'cheirographein' I am sure they interpreted it to mean what it always meant in Greek and didn't
rush off to find a Jew who could locate a similar word in Hebrew so they could know what it
meant. That the Bible should interpret the Bible in terms of principles is logical, that we can go
searching anywhere and everywhere to find out what a word meant is not logical in any way.
pagophilus,

Respectfully, I believe the purpose of this forum is to discuss issues that affect Adventists and Adventism. Avoiding information, questions, and other perspectives do not make them go away. In my mind, it calls to question the positions of those who wish to shut down debate. Further, it often, inadvertently, elevates the "undesirable" point of view.

All of this, to me seems to avoid the point of the article (in a kind of shoot the messenger way). What I am positing in the article is not Joseph Prince's point of view. I am speaking directly and specifically to Paul's framing the allegory and HIS argument for grace in the context of Mt. Sinai.

To conflate this with those who have questioned the inerrancy of the Bible seems a rather desperate effort to avoid the question. I consider myself to be more "conservative" than "traditional." My objective is to to understand the truth of the Bible, not to protect an Adventist (or any other) "position" if it is in conflict with what the Bible says. Further, though a proud and happy Adventist, I assume no inerrancy of interpretation. All things should be proved and tested by the Word. All things.

You presume I have listened to error, but the words are written on the page (Galatians 4:24). Specifically, what error have I promoted?

laffal

Preston,

Is grace greater then the law? NO! The law in Christ is law personified. And the work of grace is to do the same for us. But without the work of the law to identify sin and point it out, grace is missing what it needs to codify the law of love in our hearts / lives. I'll say it this way, with law, there is no grace. They are perfect complements to each other. Throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity we will never forget that it was grace that led us home, yet, the law will be written permanently in our hearts. The perfect balance.

Preston Foster

laffal,

Would it not seem that grace is Christ personified, as we are saved by grace, not the law (Galatians 5: 1-8)?
Kevin, how about the use of Occam's Razor here? The most obvious reading being the correct one. Cheirographein simply means "handwriting". Rather than speculate what a reader in Paul's day would have understood, why not just read handwriting as handwriting rather than certificate of debt? Surely it's as plain as plain can be.

Elaine Nelson

Admittedly, these Pauline Epistles are not too often the subject of sermons, but they should be as they are the only insight into Christian teaching in the earliest history of Christian thought.

In the discussion of Colossians 2, the following verses amplify Paul's meaning:

"From now onwards, never let anyone else decide what you should eat or drink, or whether you are to observe annual festivals, New Moons or sabbaths. These were only pale reflections of what was coming; the reality is Christ....If you have really died with Christ to the principles of this world, why do you still let rules dictate to you, as though you were still living in the world? It is forbidden to pick up this, it is forbidden to taste that?"

Where were the rules dictating the events if not in the Law, called "Moses' Law"? Isn't Paul clearly saying that they are no longer operative? What other explanation or interpretation can there be?

Preston, the error is the one-sided view of the gospel. We are saved by grace. The law was nailed to the cross. Jesus paid the price and that's it.

Yes, we are saved by grace (through faith). But faith without works is dead. And though we are saved by grace, we are judged by our works. There is an investigative judgment going on. Who is being judged? Christians. The wicked will be judged later. Why bother judging Christians if all you have to do to be saved is believe?

If you remember the definition of sin as the transgression of the law, read Romans 6:14-15 in that context.

We are no longer under the law but under grace. Think of it like this: I am caught speeding in my car. The penalty is a large fine. I am under the law so I should have to pay that fine. But the judge is kind and pays the fine for me. I am no longer under the law but under grace. It doesn't mean that I can go and speed again as soon as I'm out of the courtroom. The law is still there. Fulfilled does not mean removed. Not under the law does not mean not subject to it. Any Bible passage must be read in conjunction with the rest of the Bible to avoid jumping to false conclusions.
Preston,

Yes, but how does grace become personified within us? Does not the law have its part to play in the progression from its sin detector work to the divine love becoming personified in us? The perfect balance between law and grace in us should always be expressed in our realization that; we are totally sinful in ourselves (the law primary work), and we are totally righteous in Christ (the work of grace). One is not greater than the other, they are perfect compliments to each other in the work of God recreating His image in us.

Paul's argument in Galatians in total is a rather heated response to a group of people who had been persuaded to overemphasize the law (of Moses / circumcision) at the expense of the work of the Spirit (grace). In other words, the contrast pointed out in Galatians is law keeping as a METHOD of salvation vs. grace as the MEANS of salvation with its fruit (that which the law can find no fault in).

Without the law we will never see the need for mercy and grace. When we discover the mercy / grace of Christ as a result of the 1st work of the law, we will discover the freedom, in Christ / by His Spirit, to keep the law which is His love personified / codified in us.

Peace

Elaine Nelson

"but how does grace become personified within us?"

"By this shall all men know you are my disciples if you have love one for another." No law mentioned there. Love is the most important, as Jesus has said many times; not the law.

laffal

Elaine...Love and law are one in the same in the Bible. The point is that only by grace can we fulfill the law of love. The law was / is given to show us that we are not loving God / each other as He commanded. (He already knew that would be / is the case from the jump). So whether you agree with it or not, the law is simply loving God (#'s 1-4), and love for our fellow man (#'s 6-10), and grace is the means by which it is accomplished / experienced. It doesn't matter how you slice it, that's how it is in the Bible. Your free to accept it or not. But that's between you and God. Cutting and pasting what you agree with at the expense of what you don't agree with (or don't really understand) doesn't count.

Peace

Preston Foster

pegophilus,
It seems you are responding to the basic grace only argument (or the "one-sided view of the gospel," in characterization of my position), that I have not posited. Here are some excerpts from my column:

- "Of course, sin is still sin. There is a law. Creation and the law identify the existence and sovereignty of God. In Christ, we simply are not under that law (Galatians 6:18), but under grace."

- "I believe what Christ said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” (John 14:15). Clearly, there are things that Christ expects us to do that are related to salvation (Matthew 7:21). Paul, the original radical grace preacher, retained a consciousness of sin (Romans 6:1, Galatians 6:19-21)."

- "To me, it now makes obvious sense that the moral law was nailed to the cross. It was not made void at the cross. The cross PAID for the breaking of the law. “The WAGES of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). The law was nailed to the cross, marked “PAID IN FULL!”

That last quotation is the core of what I am positing here. It seems not one-sided to me ("It was not made void at the cross. The cross PAID for the breaking of the law"). It is a radical notion, Not in its theology, but in its fact. The fact that Christ would go to the cross for us to pay for our sins is perhaps the most radical act of love possible.

It is the freedom from the penalties of the law (in contrast to "consequences," which still remain) that seems to bother many who see that freedom as illegitimate. That freedom is not illegitimate. It IS unearned. That, to me, is what grace is.

As Paul said (Romans 6:1-2), "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid ."

The balance that I seek, for your consideration, is that apparent fact that both the ceremonial law and the moral law were, indeed, taken to the cross. Christ paid for our sins. It is by the moral law that is is defined. If we are in Him, we are free.

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**pagophilus**

Preston, I agree we are free from the penalty for sin, if we keep away from sin. Yes, if we remain in Him we are free. (Conversely, if we are not in Him, we are not free.) I think I understand what you're trying to say, but I find it hard to reconcile the moral law being nailed to the cross. If it is, why do we still need to keep the commandments?

I think it's dangerous to say that the moral law was nailed to the cross because people will interpret that to mean it no longer applies, they don't need to keep the commandments anymore. That, to me, is a plain understanding of "nailed to the cross". So yes, by grace we are free from the penalty for breaking the law, but not from the law, because we are admonished to keep it, to keep from sin.

Hence, we need to be able to distinguish when the Bible talks about the moral law and when it
talks about the ceremonial law. There are clues in the text to help us distinguish. Usually it just mentions "the law" and we need to dig deeper to find out which law it is talking about.

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**pagophilus**  
6 days ago  

Which is why I think it's dangerous to get ideas from non-Adventists, because they don't see the distinction. They read "law" and think of the whole law including the 10 commandments.

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**Elaine Nelson**  
6 days ago  

"we need to be able to distinguish when the Bible talks about the moral law and when it talks about the ceremonial law. There are clues in the text to help us distinguish."

Perhaps the inability to determine the distinction is because the Bible never describes any division in the Law: it is only the complete Law that is written about in the Bible. There is no text that ever distinguishes the Law as "moral" and "ceremonial" but it is concept fostered by Adventists to prove their doctrinal position on the Law.

As for the "danger" in getting ideas from non-Adventists, that only continues the isolation and paranoia that non-Adventists are out to destroy Adventist doctrines. Where did Adventism originate if not from those dread "outsiders"?

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**laffal**  
6 days ago  

pagophilus

I would suggest that we consider that the reason we are admonished to keep the law is to help us detect what sin is, not to keep us from sin. Paul is clear, as long as we walk in the Spirit we will not sin, because, the Spirit is the living law (Romans 8:2).

Peace

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**Preston Foster**  
6 days ago  

pagophilus,

We (try to) keep the law because we love Him. But we have and will break them (e.g. sanctification being the "work of a lifetime"). The moral law was nailed to the cross (again, not voided) to pay for all sins for all time -- to those who accept Christ.

That is why, if we confess our sins, He can and does forgive us.

The law will be applied to those who are in Christ, since in Him, we have the righteousness of
Christ. The Father will see no sin in us, as through His blood they have been forgiven and cast "into the sea of forgetfulness" Micah 7:19.

Grace is accepted through faith. Faith without works is dead. But the primary work of faith is love (Galatians 5:6).

Preston,

As much as I understand what you are stating, I would suggest you rethink the manner in which you are going about it with Colossians 2:14. The reason is this, you are, whether you see it or not, even with the explicit differentiation of nailed vs. voided, is like cross threading a nut & bolt. Your in essence forcing a meaning that is contrary to all of the prior arguments / debates / discussions on what law was nailed to the cross for at least the last 160 years or so, if not longer.

The text in it's original Greek terms with it's context is clear, it's the debt / the death warrant / sin that was nailed to the cross. It's an oxymoron, imo, to say that the moral law was nailed to the cross while not made void. I have trouble reconciling that position. Again, it's not that I don't understand what your trying to say, but I can't see how you can connect all the dots make that work.

Peace

Preston Foster

laffal

This is how the dots connect for me: Sin is defined by the moral law. Indeed, the transgression of the law is (equals) sin. The wages of sin is death (e.g. death warrant). The gift of God (through grace) is eternal life. The death warrant was nailed to the cross as paid by Christ's blood. Again, the indictment for that death warrant is the (breaking of the moral law: sin.

Preston... I'm good with that.

Trevor Hammond

The letter to the Galations and the ‘allegory’ of Abraham’s son’s, only further amplifies, the teaching that the ceremonial law is FULFILLED in Jesus Christ, the Perfect Sacrifice, at the Cross. The OT types in form and symbols together with the ceremonies, holy days, feasts and rituals were abrogated at the cross, NOT the Moral Law. To just extrapolate these said ceremonial laws into a bundled pregnant multi-Decalogue poses an inconsistent theological position.
The Moral Law is NOT sin. It is Righteous, Holy, Virtuous, Good, Immutable, Perfect. Neither is the ceremonial Law sin. It was God’s way of teaching the Plan of Salvation through the various types and symbols which pointed to Messiah. It taught God’s Grace, Love and Mercy which was expressed in type by a documented code of conduct and ceremony. The Moral Law is but a ‘mirror’ which points out and exposes sin. Jesus became the Antitypical sin offering by taking upon Himself our sin which required Him to DIE under the ‘curse’ of the (mirror) Law.

Both the ‘HAGAR’ and ‘SARAH’ covenant were ratified by the BLOOD: the OLD in type and NEWER covenant in Christ Jesus, the Antitype. The Lawgiver paid the penalty for OUR ‘transgression’ of the Law. There was no need for the Moral Law to DIE or be nailed to the cross. A PERFECT RIGHTOUS HOLY LAWKEEPER was needed to take the sinners stead. The Lamb of God was for sinners slain in order to appease the requirements of God's Holy Immutable Law. It is the Standard by which we are judged. It was this ‘perfect’ Law which required the life of Jesus in order to Redeem mankind.

If the Moral Law was ‘nailed’ on the cross then on what grounds will judgement take place? What will be the standard? Will even Grace be needed then? Do we make void the Law in order to accept God's Grace in Christ?

Under Grace in Christ

T

Elaine Nelson

The NT has given us the standard for admission to heaven:

"Love your neighbor as yourself and thus fulfill the law." Nothing in the Ten Words even mentions love to one's neighbor. These are the new commands that Jesus gave us.

And the last parable in Matt. 25 which is directed to helping those in need, even though they never knew in whose name they were done.

Trevor Hammond

1] Paul was writing to those whom HE had preached Christ to who had now become influenced by the Judaizing teachers. These Churches in Galatia were easily influenced into rites and ceremonies and legalistic code because of their former pagan affiliation that practiced a system of ceremonial symbolism which they had been accustomed to. This would include them been persuaded to undergo the rite of circumcision which didn’t go down well with Paul at all. He had taught them Christ Crucified. [Gal 4:13] [Acts 18:23] [Gal 4:8, 9] [Gal 4:9-11; Gal 5:7-12]

2] They then started to believe the insinuation that Paul himself observed the law among the Jews and that he wanted to keep them (the Gentiles) as subordinates by not wanting them to practice
these ceremonial laws of which circumcision became paramount. [Gal 5:11, Gal 4:16]

3] His purpose in this letter, among others is to show that their doctrine destroyed the very essence of Christianity, by lowering its spirituality to an outward ceremonial system.

4] “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:” (Heb 8:10). Here we find the NEWER covenant which flags the law as ‘alive and kicking’ and an active component in engaging our relationship with God.

5] The difference between the old covenant “handwriting of ordinances that was against us”, and the new covenant laws of God that he writes in our hearts (Col 2:14; Heb 8:10). The former was “the law of commandments contained in ordinances” which pronounced the penalty of sin and was “a witness against thee” (Deut 31:24-26; Ezek 18:4; Eph 2:15; James 1:15). The latter is the law of God’s “everlasting righteousness” of “the ten commandments” “written with the finger of God” on the “two tables of testimony” and now written “upon the table of thine heart.” (Exodus 31:18; Deut 9:10; Deut 10:4; Psa 119:142-151; Prov 4:20-22; Prov 7:1-3).

6] The apostle Paul said, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” (Rom 2:13). But then Paul said, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:” (Rom 3:20). These two verses seem to be totally contradicting one another, unless there is more than one law that is being spoken of by the apostle.

7] King David said that “The law of the LORD is perfect” (Psalm 19:7). But the apostle Paul said that “the law made nothing perfect” (Heb 7:19). What? A perfect law that made nothing perfect? This seems to be another contradiction in the scriptures, unless there is more than just one law being referred to in the Bible.

8] Paul said that “by grace are ye saved through faith; and...Not of works” (Eph 2:8,9). But Paul also said “that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.” (Titus 3:8). Another seeming discrepancy in the Bible. So which is it, “maintain good works”? or “Not of works”? The apostle Paul said “that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:16). But the apostle James said, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (James 2:24). Another contradiction? Not if there is more than one law that is being spoken of in the scriptures.


10] Paul said, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.” (1Cor 7:19). The apostle John said, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1John 2:4). And in Revelation we read where “the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the
remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” and, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Rev. 12:17; Rev 22:14).

T

Preston Foster

Brother Trevor,

You've written a lot, so it will take some time to catch up. I'll try some brief responses to some of your input.

- The allegory in Galatians 4:24-26 (thru verse 31) is expressly about "the two covenants; one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage . . ." and the other, from Jerusalem which is free. It goes on to say "now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise . . . we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. This allegory is specifically about the law of Mt. Sinai -- the moral law.

- No one here is contending that the moral law IS sin. The moral law defines what sin is in that if you break it, you are sinning. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. Without the (moral) law, who could say what sin is?

- In terms of the judgment, if you/we are in Christ, and covered in His righteousness, there will be no sin to see. The sins of the righteous have been forgiven -- therefore, we are not under the law (and, thus, its penalties). The law will be applied to those whose sins are before The Father, uncovered by the blood of the Savior.

- "Nailed to the cross" is an idiom for what was taken to the cross. How could Jesus die for our sins, pay the penalty for breaking the law that defines sin, without that law applying him at the cross? The law was not made void; it was paid there. Those for whom the price was paid are no longer under the law. Those who reject Christ are under the law. Obviously, we have all sinned since the cross. Sadly, we continue to do so, despite the denials of some. "All our righteousness is as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). How can a sinner be saved unless his/her sins were paid -- at the cross? Again I ask, did Jesus die only to save us from ceremony?

- I suggest the good works that are primary are: 1) to love (Galatians 5:6, 14) and to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5: 16-18). It says, "IF ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Galatians 6:18). This is conditional. If Paul were, here, referring to the ceremonial law, was that not, unquestionably, done away with at the cross?

The elephant in room for Adventists is, "What about the Sabbath?" Does grace discount or make void the Sabbath?" I believe this is what makes many of us resist the notion of freedom.

My answer is this: 1) the Sabbath preceded Mt. Sinai (the moral law) -- it was the "period" that closed the creation sentence. The Sabbath was sanctified by God at creation. It is the evidence of
God as the creator, giving him authority and making Him sovereign over all. It has not changed; 2) Again, the law is not voided by the cross. It is still God's standard. Breaking the law is the definition of sin. However, we have all broken the Sabbath as we have most of the other commandments. Unless we are in Christ, we are subject to the penalties of the law; 3) "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Need I say more? 4) Jesus, our Saviour and Advocate, conditions entry to the Kingdom on doing the will of His Father (Matthew 7:21), and 5) In the last days, per Revelation, the Sabbath will be the sign of allegiance to God the Creator over the traditions of men and the image of the beast.

So there is a firm foundation for Sabbath keeping. It is God's will and we should do His will. The Sabbath and its connections to the prophecies of the Second Coming are the message we, as Adventists, are to deliver to the body of Christ.

However, we are saved by grace.

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pagophilus

Trevor has made some good points in explaining the function of the two laws.

In relation to the nailed vs voided discussion, I'd like to suggest that we move back to biblical terminology. What exactly is the death warrant? The Bible speaks of no such thing. But even the so-called death warrant isn't nailed to the cross.

The wages of sin is death. Period. This applies to everyone. Only if we are in Christ then Christ has paid the penalty for us, so the penalty is not applied to us. But the penalty stands, and so does the law.

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pagophilus

Yes, Jesus did die to save us from ceremony (though that wasn't His only purpose for dying). The ceremony was instructional. It was to point forward to all of the things Jesus would do and accomplish, and to prepare the Jews for the coming of the Messiah. After He accomplished them, there is no more need for these ceremonies, as evidenced by the tearing of the veil in the temple.

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Preston Foster

pagophilus,

The "death warrant" language was offered by our friend, laffal, as the Greek interpretation of the literal Bible language of Colossians (re: "nailed to the cross"). He said, "The text in its original Greek terms with its context is clear, it's the debt / the death warrant / sin that was nailed to the cross." So I think we are already there.

I have said the law was NOT voided -- position I thought you embraced. The original language of
the article said the law was nailed to the cross, as in "paid in full."

Trevor declared Galatians to be referencing the ceremonial law. However, the specificity of Galatians 4: 21- 31 is unavoidable. Those verses are the locus of the allegory regarding law and grace. Trevor's notes about the functions of the ceremonial law are good, but not relevant to Galatians 4:24-25.

Finally, do you wish to avoid the most obvious and important reason for Christ's death? He died for our sins. The ceremonies were no longer necessary as the work of the (earthly) sanctuary was done; he died for our sins -- it was finished. He was the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

In regard to your position on the wages of sin, we are in violent agreement.

laffal 5 days ago  Reply

pegophilus,

You may be correct when it comes to the term death warrant not being in the Bible. But how else can we describe the condition of man under sin? The wages of sin is no different in concept / effect then a death warrant. Man under sin is condemned... period. Christ came to remove the curse of the law, which also could be defined as a death warrant, to deliver us from the curse of the law... So under grace we are no longer under the law and it's curse. Why? It was nailed to the cross and we bear it no more... Isn't that what the song we sing says?

Kevin Riley 5 days ago  Reply

The dictionary meaning of cheirographon is 'a certificate of indebtedness'. In origin it is something 'written by hand' (and what wasn't at that time?), but just as 'cheirotoneo' means 'to elect or appoint someone to an office', not simply 'to stretch out the hand', so cheirographon means a certificate of indebtedness. That is what was nailed to the cross, not the law that led to the debt. The law was not a certificate of debt, nor was it 'against us'.

pagophilus 5 days ago  Reply

In whose dictionary? And in 50AD biblical Greek? Or is that the "amplified" translation based on conjecture? Cheiro - hand. Like "chiral" in chemistry to refer to left and right handed isomers. Graphon is obvious. Think of autograph, biography etc. It takes a bit of twisting to get it to a certificate of indebtedness. Where's the "indebtedness"?

Yes, some words take on a broader meaning over time, but do you have any evidence (other than scholarly conjecture) that this word actually referred to a certificate of indebtedness at the time? If so, what was the word for "handwriting" or "something written by hand"?.
You obviously won't accept any evidence against your view, so I will leave you to do your own research, or not, as you choose. I suggest you look at "A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature" [usually abbreviated to BADG from the editors' initials] and see how often words with 'cheir-' do not mean what they literally say and then decide if the literal meaning has to be the main one. Or you could take the long route and check every piece of papyri, etc which uses the word and see what it means. As there has been over 50 years of debate on the accuracy of the above lexicon, I prefer to acknowledge the consensus of thousands of scholars from widely varied backgrounds as I don't have the time to check all the sources myself. If you have time, check out Liddell and Scott's "Greek-English Lexicon" and you will see that 'something handwritten' was never the main use of the word in historical times.

Brother Preston, my able Friend!
I don't mean to 'hog' your 'blog' and wish I could write like you guys (though sometimes I've got to get out my 'unabridged' Oxford dictionary)... :)

Regarding the 'allegory' and Mt Sinai - One has to consider too that there were a lot of loaded happenings at this significant place. The question that comes to my mind is: "Is Mount Sinai therefore as per your position regarding the allegory in Gal 4:24-25 = THE DECOLOGUE?" or "referencing specifically to the Decalogue ONLY? ... in terms of it been nailed?"

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An example of this 'happenings at Sinai' is [Lev 7:37-38] which I have randomly chosen:

1] These, then, are the regulations for the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering and the fellowship offering, which the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai on the day he commanded the Israelites to bring their offerings to the Lord, in the Desert of Sinai.

2] and [Lev 27:30-34] “‘A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the Lord. He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.’” These are the commands the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.

The OLD covenant was ratified there at Sinai (by the blood in type) of which the Ceremonial Law was integrated into the Sacrificial System with regards to fulfilling the said Covenant! (While the NEW obviously when Jesus died in Jerusalem)

In the context of Galatians and the major issues surrounding the OLD covenant gives rise to Paul emphasising the 'nailing' of these types in Christ Jesus. It was DONE AWAY WITH by the Antitypical Lamb of God. To extend this to mean that the Decalogue was 'nailed' or DONE AWAY
WITH is the old familiar line which is used to abrogate the 'Sabbath'.

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Grace AND Law CAN coexist! The Cross displays this very clearly...

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If you are referencing the just the Curse of the Law [Gal 3:13] - "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ... then I agree that Mt Sinai will = the Curse of the Law (which is God's Law nonetheless).

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T

laffal

G5498
χειρόγραφον
cheiographon
Thayer Definition:
1) a handwriting, what one has written by his own hand
2) a note of hand or writing in which one acknowledges that money has either been deposited with him or lent to him by another, to be returned at the appointed time.

Preston Foster

Brother Trevor,

Thank you for your kind words and continued input.

Before responding directly to your input, let me reiterate what I have said (and did not say), re: "nailed to the cross." It seems I am debating against a reaction to an Adventist understanding of the idiom, rather than what my column actually said.

I said:

- "Of course, sin is still sin. There is a law. Creation and the law identify the existence and sovereignty of God. In Christ, we simply are not under that law (Galatians 6:18), but under grace."

- "I believe what Christ said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” (John 14:15). Clearly, there are things that Christ expects us to do that are related to salvation (Matthew 7:21). Paul, the original radical grace preacher, retained a consciousness of sin (Romans 6:1, Galatians 6:19-21)."

- "To me, it now makes obvious sense that the moral law was nailed to the cross. It was NOT (emphasis added) made void at the cross. The cross PAID for the breaking of the law. “The WAGES of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). The law was nailed to
the cross, marked “PAID IN FULL!”

So again, being purposefully redundant, have NOT argued that, by nailing the moral law to the cross, it is voided, done away with, or diluted in terms of its penalties (wages of sin, etc.).

What I AM saying about the law is this:

- The wages of sin IS death. The law was nailed (i.e. "paid" or "satisfied") to the cross with Christ, who paid those wages with His innocent blood.
- If we are not in Christ and covered by His blood, we are subject to pay the sin penalty for ourselves.
- Grace and law are concurrent, but do not co-exist. Grace applies to those who are in Christ -- and the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); the law applies to those who reject Christ and rely on their ability to fulfill the law on their own (in the flesh) to achieve righteousness (Galatians 5:4).
- We are children of the promise, free, not under the law (Galatians 4:31).

Now, regarding the context of "the law" in Galatians and specifically in Galatians 4, here are my arguments that, I believe, indicate that Paul was clearly pointing to the moral law (and, at times, inclusive of the ceremonial):

- Galatians 2:21. "...for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Again, Christ died to pay for our sins against the moral law. Therein is our righteousness.
- Galatians 2:19-20. "For through the law, I am dead to the law that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ... and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by grace of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Again, Christ gave Himself to pay the death penalty for our breaking of the moral law. Paying that price for us -- fulfilling the law, allows us "through the law" to be "dead to the law."
- Galatians 4: 4-5. "... God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." God sent Jesus, born under the moral law, to REDEEM (through His blood payment TO THE MORAL LAW) us from the death penalty of the moral law.

It is in this context that the allegory (with its references to Mt. Sinai) of Galatians 4: 21-31 is written.

The law (moral and ceremonial) was taken to the cross. By paying for the moral law with His blood, the ceremonial laws were done away with, as what they symbolized had been accomplished, in fact. The cross paid the penalty of the moral law and did away with the ceremonial law. The penalties for the moral law remain (as the moral law remains), for those (sinners) who reject Christ's gift.
Close to good Reformed Theology Preston.

The law has not been cancelled as a standard or guide. The debt of our guilt was nailed to the cross and satisfied by Christ's sacrifice...and by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified...even through the indwelling Spirit. We are "reckoned" righteous by Christ's obedience that we accept by faith. That "legal fiction" stuff "classical" Protestants believe.

regards,
pat

Elaine Nelson

Was John referring to Christ's commands when he said "Blessed are those that do his commandments?"

In his Gospel, John quotes Jesus as saying:

"I give you a new commandment: Love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples."

Usually, those words in Revelation, rather than referring back to John's Gospel, are Moses' Law, or the Ten words. Which is it?

laffal

Elaine,

It's interesting that you have time and again stated that the Jews never separated the moral (10 commandment) law from the ceremonial law, yet, you seem to constantly on the other hand, separate the 10 commandment / moral law from John's gospel. There is no difference between all of your listed laws. Love for God and for your fellow man is at the heart God and His law.

Elaine Nelson

Name a single one of the ten that mentions love. The very definition of "Law" excludes love, something freely chosen. Laws must be followed else there are penalties. What are the penalties for not showing love? These should not be confused.

Read all the Ten Commandments and they are either demanding action, or prohibiting actions. Love has nothing to do with law; in fact, they are entirely different. Does a spouse have demands, or laws for his spouse? Or, is love the ruling factor, and not laws? God does not want our
observances of laws, but our love.

Please furnish a text separating the Ten commandments (which you define as "moral" and what are the "ceremonial" laws? Where was the ceremonial law abolished but the moral law was sustained?

Not only Christ, but Paul, the apostle to the Gentils also was clear:

"For the whole Law (what does whole mean?) is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" He also writes to the Romans: "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the LETTER."

How is it possible to read Paul, as well as the rest of the NT, and still conclude that the Ten Commandments are still to be our guide, when Paul could not be more clear in writing: "the Law WAS to be out guardian until Christ came and we could be justified by faith. Now that that time has come we are no longer under that guardian, and you are, all of you, sons of God THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS....and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek....but all of you are one in Christ Jesus. He had to have been referring to The Law of the Jews as the Greeks and slaves had no such laws to which they were faithful. The Jews had made the Law their guide in all of their life.

Please interpret these verses.

The Gospel is the Good News of Jesus Christ; Love was never included in the Law until Christ came.

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Pat Travis

Rom.13:8-10.

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Pat Travis

The problem is...we are NOT loving...but sinners continually in needing "forgiving and growing grace."

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laffal

Elaine,

What Bible do you think Jesus and Paul used to preach / teach from?

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18 ESV)
By the way, Jesus is quoting this text as recorded in John 13, so in actuality what Jesus had to say to the disciples was not new. It was new in contrast with what the Jewish leadership was teaching at the time, but definitely not new.

The 10 words are all about love. Love for God and your fellow man. If you follow the 10 altogether, you will, by the grace of God, never stop loving God, nor do anything that would demonstrate a lack of love for your fellow man (honor for your parents, stealing, adultery, murder, lying, coveting).

Being delivered from under law is simply another way of saying that we do not have to try and keep the law to be saved as the Pharisees taught. We've been delivered from that.

Elaine Nelson

Of what use is a law if "we do not have to try and keep" it?

How could we obey the law of love, or better yet, the Golden Rule and not be demonstrating love for everyone?

BTW: What use is a law without penalty? What is the penalty for disobeying the Jewish Law? (Christian law is the law of love, no specified acts as the Ten Words).

laffal

Elaine,

You keep trying to make a distinction that the Bible does not make, a difference between Jewish law and Christian law. Example:

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:14-15 ESV)

What is sin without the 10 commandments? Paul says where there is not law, there is no sin. (Romans 4:15) How can someone abide in death except it be the wages of sin to hate your brother? Sounds like retribution of some sort to me. It's actually the end result, but that's a different matter.

You can argue your point until you're what ever color you want to be in the face, but you are not being honest with the Bible when you continue to try and, in the line of this blog, nail the 10 commandment law to the cross.
Elaine,

It is called Grace in this sense...the grace that brings salvation...also instructs...Titus 2:11,12.

Which of the Last 6 laws Paul refers to in Rom.13 if violated demonstrates true love.

regards,
pat

Elaine Nelson

How does the law against coveting demonstrate love?

Paul summarizes them all in "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Noticeably absent is the fourth commandment in this list.)

The Jewish system had hundreds of laws, all of which were described in minute detail. The Christian message, of which Paul was the first expositor, should be the Christian's guide and he eliminates all the Jewish laws and simplifies them into the command to love.

Adventist Christians have elected to go backward and revive many of the Jewish laws and incorporate them into their religious system. In doing this, they ignore most of Paul's most eloquent and simple messages directed to us, the Gentiles. The Jews were given no instructions to eliminate their laws, and so they went their separate ways following the Jerusalem controversy and Paul became the major figure of the Christian church following the Jewish-Christians demise after the temple was destroyed.

The question is: Are Adventists following more of Judaism than Christianity?

That answer is found in their Fundamental Beliefs.

Pat Travis

Elaine,

The 10th commandment sets the basis of "property rights." Those who love rejoice in their neighbors prosperity gained lawfully and do not desire by any collective or individual means to take it from them.

regards,
pat

Stephen Foster

The 10th commandment has nothing whatsoever to do with constitutional property rights. The
10th commandment has everything to do with the coveter and neither says nor implies anything either to or about those whose property may be coveted. It (the 10th commandment) does not convey nor imply any rights to those whose property may be coveted.

Elaine Nelson 4 days ago  Reply

Is it possible to covet what are not "things"? A good home, not another's; a good education, IOW, desiring those non-material things that enhance one's life.

Speaking of "property rights" women were considered "property" when the 4th and 7th commandment were given. Wives were never mentioned in the fourth but animals were included; the 7th forbids taking another man's wife--which was his possession--she had no rights in that equation.

Laws that were made for a particular people at a particular time in history cannot always be applicable three millennia later.

Preston Foster 3 days ago  Reply

To All,

For those who may still doubt our freedom in Christ and the grace He provides for us, please consider reading the entire chapter of 2 Corinthians 3. Please read it prayerfully.

Have a blessed Sabbath. I welcome your thoughts.

Pat Travis 2 days ago  Reply

Excuse me Stephen but the 10th does apply to property rights under the Theocratic OT Covenant.

People of America and other Western Nations did "re-apply" that to an understanding of law in modern governments to property rights.

As to the OT would you say Ahab got into a bit of trouble for coveting Naboth's vineyard?

regards,
pat

Pat Travis 2 days ago  Reply

PS. If one had no "rights" in what way would it be wrong to covet that which did not belong lawfully to anyone?
To All,

For those who may still doubt our freedom in Christ and the grace He provides for us, please consider reading the entire chapter of 2 Corinthians 3. Please read it prayerfully.

Have a blessed Sabbath. I welcome your thoughts.

Also...
...the Ten Commandments that are usually referred to as 'the moral law'...
...are the Old Covenant.

Deuteronomy 4:13 "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone."

Exodus 34:28 "And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

This Old Covenant has been replaced by a New Covenant in Jesus blood...

Matthew 26:28 "For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

...and it is this 'moral law' Old Covenant that was vanishing away...

Hebrews 8:13 "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

...and in the first century AD.

And it only took 19 centuries to bring back the old covenant and claim its permanency. Sad, that Adventists return to the Old Testament for their doctrines and ignore the Christian message found in the New Testament. Pouring old wines into new wineskins soon burst them: the Gospel is free and cannot be contained in the old covenant made with the Jews.

Geoff,

You've got it twisted my man.
Galatians 4:22-31

Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar precede Israel at Mt. Sinai. Paul is saying that the Old Covenant was related to the law given at Sinai as it pertained to the children of Israel's promise to keep the 10 commandment (moral law).

All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. (Exodus 19:8 ESV)

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." (Exodus 24:7 ESV)

The New Covenant was given to Abraham when God promised to give him a son (Genesis 12:2; 13:14-16; 15:1-6; 17:1-10; Psalm 105:1-7). This covenant was based on God's promise to Abraham (humanity) thru the blood of God's Son (Genesis 3:15;21; Leviticus 17:11; Revelation 13:8; Luke 24:25.26.45-47). The death of Christ as an atonement for sin, purchased pardon from the transgression of the moral law, and it that which was nailed to the cross.

The usage of the Old / New Covenant in the book of Hebrews is a contrast between the sanctuary service as a interactive lesson book on how the New Covenant would be realized in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is like of photograph. What would you rather have the picture or the person (shadow / sanctuary serivce / ceremonial law or substance / Christ Jesus? The key words in Hebrews is better.

Why was the sanctuary services to Israel? Because they failed to keep their promise to do "all that the Lord has said" in less the 40 days after the promise. From that point on the Old Covenant was broken and could never be repaired / re-established as a viable method of obtaining salvation. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-11).

Peace

Geoff

I went to Cirque du Soleil yesterday...
...and you just displayed more gymnastics than they did.

There was no New Covenant until Jesus blood...

Jeremiah looked forward to the New Covenant not back to Abraham...
...God through Jeremiah said "I will make a new covenant" (Jere 31:31)...
...not looking back to Abraham's arrangement.

2 Corinthians 1:20 fits nicely here.

Abraham's test of faith in the New Covenant came when he was asked to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22) The Old / New Covenant's are not a matter of time but of condition.

For those who read Ellen white, in her book Selected Messages book 2 (2SM) There is a chapter called The Law in Galatians. She states, "I was asked about which law was added" and she also said that "both the moral and ceremonial law was nailed to the cross."

The law that we are to "keep" is the law that is written on our heart. The new covenant. "A new heart/mind will I give you. This is a clear conviction of Christian duty, and understanding of truth. We don't have to have a list to read. As we read Scripture we will be led in the way we should go. "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator-individuality, power to think and to do. Ed.17

I like this quote. "Teachers should lead students to think, and clearly to understand the truth for themselves. It is not enough for the teacher to explain or for the student to believe; inquiry must be awakened, and the student must be drawn out to state the truth in _HIS_ own language, thus truths should thus be impressed upon the mind. This may be a slow process; but it is of more value than rushing over important subjects without due consideration." 6T154

Sorry for the misquote
The quote of Ellen white is in Selected Messages book one. p.233
"I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ?
Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments..."
Elaine Nelson

There is one, and only one reason that Adventists have insisted that there are two separate and distinct laws, despite there is no separation throughout both the Old and New Testaments where there is only one Law which is referred to. This is done to enforce the Sinaitic Law of the Fourth Commandment. Were it not for that one command, why would there need to be a division into two separate laws?

Galatians is read but when "Law" is read, it is ASSUMED to mean the "ceremonial" and not the "moral"--labels that nowhere appear in Scripture but were invented by Adventists.

Paul was explicitly clear when he wrote that the Law was given UNTIL Christ came. Why, then, recognizing Christ, do they hang onto both the Law and Christ?

laffal

Elaine,

Once again, Paul's argument is not about the law having validity until Christ came at which point it is no longer relevant. If you read the entire book, the issue is "law keeping" as a means for obtaining / maintaining salvation:

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. (Galatians 2:21 ESV)

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Galatians 3:1-3 ESV)

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. (Galatians 5:4 ESV)

Paul never dismissed the law of God as no longer relevant to the Christian. Quite the contrary:

So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (Romans 7:12-13 ESV)

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:8-11 ESV)

The law will always point out sin, for it alone provides the true definition for sin. Once the sinner
accepts Christ as their personal Savior from sin, the law is the light that guides the Christian in the way Christ leads.

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, (Proverbs 6:23 ESV)

Peace

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Preston Foster

Elaine,

It may be that Adventists have, in general, seemingly held too closely to the law. If so, I believe that it is because, as a last day church, 7th Day Adventists were given the light and the Spirit to focus on the day God sanctified at creation. The purpose of the 7th day Sabbath, in the end times, is to identify those who are following the God of creation rather than the God of man's tradition (or the image of the beast).

Further, it remains true that we should respect and do God's will out of a heart of love. Jesus expects this of us (Matthew 7:21). And, I believe, Adventists have been, among Protestants at least, entrusted with "remembering the sabbath day . . ." Note: I am aware of 7th Day Baptists and other Sabbath-keeping Protestant denominations.

Holding to the law, we have, perhaps, not gained knowledge and confidence in the Spirit. But there is a time for everything (Galatians 3:23-26). Like most freed slaves, having been in bondage for so long, many of us don't know what to do with our freedom. Thus, Paul warns us: Galatians 5:13. Now is the time for us to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:18), who, as Jesus promised, will lead us into all truth (John 16:13).

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Jim Ripley

If my understanding is correct this discussion was the great issue at the 1888 General Conference Session and EGW's response to the question concerning which law was nailed to the cross was in the wake of that meeting. She sided with the view of Jones and Waggoner. I believe her view is correct. Nailed to the cross was the use of law to "righteousify" us.

Someone mentioned the that sin is "the transgression of the law". This is a KJV paraphrase of one Greek word, "anomia" which is probably better translated as "lawlessness". Thus, "sin is lawlessness".

To my thinking, and I believe that of St. Paul, even if there were no ten commandments, sin would still exist.
When speaking of "The Law", it could mean, the 10 commands, first five books of Old Testament, all old Testament "The law and the prophets", or all Scripture. Galatians says, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." Galatians 3:;24 "In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law." 6BC 1110.

"The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely - because he is required to do so will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey...True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God.(Scripture) The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right..."Christ Object Lessons 97,98

"It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell it becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence... the grace of God alone has power to exalt man.." GC555

As the face of a flower follows the sun so it is that man obeys the law.

It is not what you do to obey.... Unconsciously you can't keep from it. You will obey God without thinking of the lists.

"Here are they that KEEP the commandments of God." Yes they "keep" the principles of God law, even if they had never read them...They are good trustworthy people.

Thanks Beverly for these pertinent quotes.

It seems The Bible and EGW are consistent on this. I wonder how much of what is taught (re: only the ceremonial being "nailed") got to be so (apparently) off point?

"The purpose of the 7th day Sabbath, in the end times, is to identify those who are following the God of creation rather than the God of man's tradition (or the image of the beast)."

Yet in John we read: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

There is nothing in the entire NT that ever identifies the Sabbath as an identifying mark of those who are following God. This is a perversion that Adventism has created as nothing in all of the Gospels and NT ever mention Sabbath's importance to God's people. Even in one of the most used verses (Rev. 22:14), the correct reading is:
"Happy are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the tree of life and can come through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14) Jerusalem.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city" (NASB)

We should not demand too great an interest in consistency from an apocalyptic seer. Apocalypses in general were not written for a world or a people or a church hundreds or thousands of years later than their time of writing. They were written for their own day and generation.

The apocalyptic denominations have placed their entire raison d'être on their interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies—-a most ambiguous doctrine that endeavors to place themselves at the apex of the denouement.

Beverly Kirby

Preston, "Much of what is taught is off point". The most interesting pointed quotes from EGW are never mentioned. I think our leaders of the SDA church think the "common people" might not understand their interpretation of scripture.

One of the reasons that some don't like Ellen white is that we've heard her quoted only in some cases to prove a point (over and over again). There is seldom introduced anything interesting or provocative. I have so many quotations of EGW that would never be brought up in class or church.

This is one of my favorite quotes from EGW.

"But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussions.

"The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what." 5T.p.706,707; GW 297.298

"The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." RH 12.20,1892. EGW materials p. 991

"The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us through fear to right action? This ought not to be." RH
8.2.1881; That I May Know Him 320; ST 3.17.1887; Lift Him up 98

"There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour's teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of their ministers. But are ministers infallible..." GC 595-597; RH 6.7.1906

"The people of God have educated themselves in such a way that they have come to look to those in positions of trust as guardians of truth, and have placed men where God should be. When perplexities have come upon them, instead of asking God, they have gone to human sources for help,...The president of the Conference is not to do the thinking for all the people. He has not an immortal brain, but has capabilities and powers like any other man....When men place the president of the Conference in the place of God...they are doing that which is exactly opposite to what Christ has told them to do." RH 8.7.1894

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**Preston Foster**  
1 day ago  **Reply**

To no one's surprise, Elaine, this is where we disagree.

The quotation you sited (mine) speaks to the prophetic role of the Sabbath in differentiating those who follow the image of the beast vs. those who are following the traditions of men. You, again, conflate this with salvation, then accuse others of doing so.

Who is saved is a function of who loves his fellowman (re: your reference to John's writings), claims and accepts Christ in their hearts, and the grace of God. The Sabbath will help identify true worship from false. The two are related, but not the same.

You contend that there is nothing in the New Testament that identifies the Sabbath with those who are following God. However, Revelations 14:12 speaks directly to that point. The commandments of God (in contrast to the commandments of Jesus), include the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath, are explicitly introduced with the words, "And God spake all these words saying . . ." Exodus 20:1. Again, we are not saved by the sabbath. However, Revelation 14:12 describes those who will stand in the last days.

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**Preston Foster**  
1 day ago  **Reply**

Thanks, Beverly. Incredible stuff. We will share this widely.

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**Beverly Kirby**  
1 day ago  **Reply**

My friend Elaine....I thank you for agitating all of us to searching and being agitated with you.....This is your calling. I don't always agree and I get agitated with you but we, or at least I, appreciate you.
Agitate, agitate, agitate. The subjects which we present to the world must be to us a living reality. It is important that in defending the doctrines which we consider fundamental articles of faith we should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound. These may avail to silence an opposer, but they do not honor the truth. We should present sound arguments, that will not only silence our opponents, but will bear the closest and most searching scrutiny. With those who have educated themselves as debaters there is great danger that they will not handle the word of God with fairness. In meeting an opponent it should be our earnest effort to present subjects in such a manner as to awaken conviction in his mind, instead of seeking merely to give confidence to the believer. {2TT 313.1}

Whatever may be man’s intellectual advancement, let him not for a moment think that there is no need of thorough and continuous searching of the Scriptures for greater light. As a people we are called individually to be students of prophecy. We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us. We are to catch the first gleamings of truth; and through prayerful study clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others. {2TT 313.2}

When God’s people are at ease and satisfied with their present enlightenment, we may be sure that He will not favor them. It is His will that they should be ever moving forward to receive the increased and ever-increasing light which is shining for them. The present attitude of the church is not pleasing to God. There has come in a self-confidence that has led them to feel no necessity for more truth and greater light. We are living at a time when Satan is at work on the right hand and on the left, before and behind us; and yet as a people we are asleep. God wills that a voice shall be heard arousing His people to action. {2TT 313.3}

Thanks again Elaine for arousing us to action of truth or not truth. Yes you can be most agitating, like it or not. Many times I have said to myself, "that lady doesn't know what she is talking about, but I enjoy the challenge. It certainly isn't boring!

Preston Foster

Indeed!

:) 

Elaine Nelson

The KJV must be used (as in certain Daniel prophecies) as it was the source for EGW's interpretations of both D&R. Since that time, we have much better and more accurate translations, and the two translations that I furnished have no mention whatsoever about "commandments" but that they have washed their robes, which is impossible to be interpreted as commandments; and if it were, then the commandments that Jesus gave were to love one another.

Returning to the Exodus for Christians to return to keep the Jewish laws, after Paul's admonition in both Galatians and Romans makes Adventist stand apart from all Christendom in not accepting Christian teaching.
Admittedly, these are not questions usually asked in SDA settings, but they should be and there
should be better answers than quoting extra-biblical interpretation or mangling Scripture.

Preston Foster

Elaine,

Where is the scripture being mangled?

Beverly Kirby

EGW quotes on the book of Revelation

"We do not understand the word as we should. The book of Revelation opens with an injunction to
us to understand the instruction that it contains. 'Blessed is he that reads and hears the words of this
prophecy, God declares, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.'
When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great
revival. We do not understand fully the lessons that it teaches, not withstanding the injunction
given us to search and study it." TM 113

"When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely
different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that
heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the
blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart." TM 114

What is this "entirely different religious experience"

The first thing we need to recognize and admit it that we don't know it all... there are many things
we have wrong. Not many giving the Revelation Seminars would dare admit.

Not only is the book of revelation about, or of Jesus Christ, It is also the Dragon story.... In my
opinion we haven't considered the possibility that some of the events described in Revelation
originate from the father of lies rather than from the throne of God. We've told the same rendition
of the Revelation Seminars so long that - The eyes can't see what the mind can't bear.

When we can spend time studying the message of the THIRD ANGEL - "The WINE of God's
wrath, fury, anger of God unmixed, full strength, fire than never goes out, the torments that goes up
forever, no relief day or night. What is this fire? What is "God's wine"? Is this wine considered
false doctrine about God?

"When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely
different religious experience." TM 114 Interesting!
I've been reading some the writings of Sigve Tonstad on the Book of Revelation. "Saving God's Reputation". This makes more sense than the seminars.

Elaine Nelson

Preston asks:

"Where is the scripture being mangled?

Notoriously, in the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation where both writers were clearly describing current events. Adventists are only the latest in a long line of readers who have felt that the works were composed with them in mind. However, Daniel was most accurately describing Antiochus Epiphanes who desecrated the sanctuary and the 2300 EVENINGS AND MORNINGS have been interpreted to mean 2300 days (resulting in twice the number) and then interpreting them as years, with no indication in the prophecy that this should be done. In getting to 1844, the early SDA leaders chose the date of 1844, and then went backwards to arrive at a very inexact time: IOW, choose your interpretation, and then "mangle" the prophecy so it results in the original event desired.

In Revelation: there is a world of difference to "Blessed are they that do his commandments" and "Blessed are they who have washed their robes." Only by limiting to the KJV were Adventists able to arrive at their interpretation.

laffal

Elaine,

"Notoriously" .... Each book, Daniel and Revelation are self-described as being written for the end of time. You yourself have not proof that each of these books had their fulfillment in their respective times. As for the pioneers arriving at the date 10/22/1844... Daniel provides 3 sequence of dates that clearly nails down the dates set forth by them. You can't use the 2,300 evening / mornings, the 1,240 / 1,290 / 1,335 days to arrive at, much less nail down Antiochus Epiphanes as the supposed little horn revealed to Daniel. For the most part he is a rather insignificant player in world history. So be careful lest you be found as one of the "manglers" so mentioned.

Elaine Nelson

Laffal:

It all depends on what the writer believed was "the end of time." This allows each generation to see he is living at the "end of time," just as we all do--our time is limited on this earth.

There is nothing at all in either Daniel or John's Revelation that they were writing or thinking ahead 2000 years, as the NT writers in multiple places truly believed that the end of time was in
their own generation. Jesus, himself, is quoted as saying "I tell you, solemnly, there are some of these standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming with his kingdom."

Nor is there anything in Daniel's writings fortelling any event so far ahead in the future.

To say, in retrospect, that Antiochus Epiphanes is a "rather insignificant player in world history" is only because we today have more than 2000 years of history on which to reflect. There have been many major players during their time, and will continue to be. For instance, in the 20th century, Hitler was probably the most (in)famous figure; for the third century B.C., Alexander was the most famous figure; Caligula and Nero were dreaded figures of Christianity in the first century. It all depends on the perspective of the writer or speaker. Antiochus was a very major figure who desecrated the Jews' sacred temple and slaughtered so many of their people. How can it be said that he was "insignificant" to those of Daniel's time in which he was writing? There is absolutely no indication that he was writing for people 2,000 years in the future? Where is the evidence?

Added to that, nearly all Biblical scholars (excepting SDA) give many evidences that Daniel was written ca. 160 B.C., and not in the 5th century B.C. Adventists must hold that date in order to "prove" their prophecy. It's a circular fallacy: it must be earlier to concincide with our prophecy, and our prophecy can only be true if we pick the date.

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Preston Foster

My Dear Elaine,

If Revelation was describing current day events (at the time of its writing), then the second coming of Christ (Revelation 19:11-21) is the least publicized apocalyptic event of all time. the destruction of the wicked Revelation 20: 5-15 was also under-reported, and the time of trouble -- where one third of mankind was killed (Revelation 9:14-21) must have been a breeze -- because no one bothered to record the history.

Forgive the sarcasm, but you get my drift.

But we digress. This column is about law and grace -- and what was nailed to the cross. It seems we agree that the law -- all of it was nailed to the cross. The issue, now, is what does that mean? Do I understand your position to be that the 10 commandments were voided at the cross? If so, how do you define sin, currently?

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laffal

Elaine,

It quite the contrary to "what the writer believed 'the end of time.'" They simply wrote what they were told to write. It is what God meant by the end of time. Each one of the 4 time prophecies in Daniel are interlocked / connected, and I've yet to see you or any of you beloved scholars outside
of SDA-ism come up with a coherent interpretation of these dates and their relation to history / the present / the future.

Biblically, Antiochus is a non-starter, he by no means meets all of the tests that would identify him as the little horn. Because Paul is talking about the same character / perversions in 2 Thessalonians 2.

And I will have to line up with Preston at this point. The same scholars you seem to be leaning on, also state that the law of God has been made void / it's not needed. So what was the point in Christ dying for our sin? When Christ comes to live in you by faith... does He leave His law somewhere else, or does He bring it with Him?

Elaine Nelson

Preston,

Revelaton was written AFTER the Christ event, and after the resurrection. When, in our history was one-third of the world's mankind killed?

Laffal:

How do you know the intent of the writer who referred to "the end of time"? Being told what to write does not imply they knew everything it represented as Daniel confessed. To presume what "God meant" is to presume to know God's mind.

As for Daniel's prophecy, The writer of Thessalonians does not identify who the "Rebel" or Enemy is, but it apparently describes the "AntiChrist" who is not one individual but anyone who fights against God's people. This cannot be one individual unless a caesar as many claimed to be a god.

As for those who say that the law of God has been made void, one need only read Paul's letters to find the place of the Law in Christianity:

"The Law was to be out guardian UNTIL the Christ came...Now that time has come, we are no longer under that guardian....He has overriden the Law." "The Law is not even based on faith." "Faith in Christ rather than fidelity to the Law is what justifies us, and no one can be justified by keeping the Law. "We are now rid of the Law, freed by death from our imprisonment, free to serve in the new spiritual way and NOT the old way of a WRITTEN LAW." The Jews had no need of faith as they had the Law to be their constant guide.

Christ died to remove the curse of the Law and is the end of law for righteousness. He also said that he that loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law. This would include the last six that addresses our duties toward our neighbors. Not all of the Ten relate to our neighbors.