**August 26, 2011**

**This Week at Adventist Today Online**

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<td>Memory loss, desperation, and fear of the future—it may sound like Alzheimer’s, but could be what Winston Churchill called his &quot;Black Dog,&quot; depression. Rob York writes about ways people respond to life—and says depression may be purposely encoded in some DNA for the benefit of all. As in Churchill, it can be a grave but faithful companion that inspires deep, careful, and ultimately inspiring reflections.</td>
<td>Ervin Taylor believes creationists who support the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 may be ignoring one of their more potent arguments. Taylor finds the book <em>Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation</em> to be erudite and intriguing. Why do so few seem to know anything about it?</td>
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### In the News
Angwin: Where Conviction Meets Cabernet  Like a lone island on a sea of wine, Angwin, California, holds tenaciously to its tea totaling ways, far above the fray of cork-popping and cup-hoisting below. But as more and more wineries plant their roots in the valley, are the days numbered for the Adventist community and its centerpiece, Pacific Union College?

Additional reading from last week...

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<th>Death of the Liberal Class*: We borrow the terms &quot;liberal&quot; and &quot;conservative&quot; from politics, but often know little of their history or meaning. Why is being called a &quot;Liberal&quot; now an insult? Author Chris Hedges, a self-declared liberal, explains not only why, but how the insult may be at least partially deserved. (atoday.org subscription needed)</th>
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Are You Ready? (Parables in Matthew 25)

Submitted Aug 26, 2011
By Kent Rufo

The great Advent message: Jesus is coming again…soon! Do you believe this? This has been our denomination’s great mission: to spread the great news about His soon return. The second coming of our Lord has such a substantial place in our hearts that it even resides within our denominational name. We are the ones who believe in the seventh day Sabbath and the imminent return of Jesus Christ (to take us home to be with Him). Along with this Advent message to “be ready for Jesus is coming back”, I believe that He was giving the “formula” (I use this word cautiously because I don’t want to imply that following this method will guarantee salvation) on how we are to be ready. It seems more than probable that Jesus was laying this all out in the three parables of Matthew 25. Quite possibly Jesus was telling us that there is more to “being ready” than to giving up jewelry, becoming vegan and running to the mountains.

I personally have attended several “Revelation seminars” that have discussed the return of the Messiah with all walks of faith. I’ve seen people come to experience the love of the Savior for the first time. I’ve also seen some eyes opened when they see in Scripture that we truly are in the last days of human history as we know it. In these seminars the theme of “be ready, for your maker is coming soon” is spread throughout. Starting with Daniel 8 and the 1844 proclamation and ending with final parts of Revelation, Jesus’ message is “I am coming back…soon!”

One of the “staple” texts used to show the imminence of Jesus’ return comes from His own lips in Matthew 24. He gives signs and clues which identify the last days of history. He then makes a statement that should ring in all believers’ ears: “Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming…For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.” (verse 42 and 44). “BE READY”! This is Jesus’ counsel so we might want to take it seriously.

As you might notice, the word “therefore” is used in Matthew 24:42 (quoted above), which implies the previous context is important. In verses 40 and 41 there are differentiations between two people: two men in a field and then two women in a mill. Both examples have one being taken and the other “left behind” (I’m definitely not advocating secret rapture here). Obviously there must be something that the Lord sees different between the two groups of people, hence, this is why one is taken and the other is left. Actually, Jesus seems to use this same type of parable all throughout Matthew 25. What I now plan to show is that the three parables of Matthew 25 and this parable of “one taken and one left” are actually different parables stating the same thing. They are characterizing who these people are (see below).

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<th>Two in a Field/Mill</th>
<th>10 Virgins</th>
<th>Talents</th>
<th>Sheep and Goats</th>
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<td><strong>Righteous:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wise:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good Stewards:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sheep:</strong></td>
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<td>• Is taken (or “left”, depending on your theological)</td>
<td>• Took extra oil in flasks.</td>
<td>• Used what was given to them (according to their abilities) for the</td>
<td>• Sitting on right.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Were ready when</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fed hungry and thirsty, let in</td>
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Before I proceed in comparing the parables it is imperative that we remember that these are only parables. They have a message yet are not to be taken as totally literal.

**Exposition:**

The method I will take in comparing the parables is by going backwards, first comparing the sheep/goats with the good stewards/bad stewards. First of all, it seems that Jesus is talking about “believers” in all of these parables. Both sheep and goats, the animals of illustration, were animals used in sacrifice. They were known to be associated with the Sanctuary services. They are both seen by the Christian world as good-standing Christians. They all probably attend church regularly. They all try to abstain from cursing and they all try smiling at people. But the difference is that the sheep use what they have to bless others’ lives. They apparently care more about the “least of these” than themselves. As for the goats, they probably would have given these things if it was actually going to Jesus, but since it was just to the “least of these” they had better things to do with their resources (time, money, food, etc.). This seems to allude to a real desire to help others, rather just to gain points with the Judge. The goats have a skewed view of who the Judge is and what pleases Him. They think that just abstaining from things is what “prepares” them for Him. But the Judge reveals that He desires His children to give what they have to bless the lives of less fortunate. In a less detailed way, this skewed view of the Master seems to be the problem with the wicked steward. The good stewards use what they have been given for the Master’s work. In return they are blessed doubly. (Remember: this is only a parable which states they are blessed financially but this type of person could be blessed in other ways) As for the wicked steward, he keeps what has been given for himself. Sure, he is planning to return it to the Master, but just to avoid punishment. He, along with the goats, is more concerned with abstaining from “evil things” than with proactively using what the Master has given him to bless others. And the result is the same for the goats and for this wicked steward.

Now to the Virgins. Just like the other two parables, they are connected to the Judge, Master and in this case, the Bridegroom. These are believers in God and His return (not atheists). Both sets of virgins are waiting for His return. The problem is that one group has enough oil for the delay and the other group just brought enough in the case of no delay by the Bridegroom. Traditionally, we have taught that the oil is the Holy Spirit and that the wise virgins just had more Holy Spirit than the others. This just doesn’t make sense. This would imply that there is a Holy Spirit “meter” that if you don’t reach it then Jesus will not take you to
be with Him. Rather it makes more sense to keep this in its parable context and in context with the other parables. First of all, what makes the wise virgins wise? Was it just because they brought extra oil? Could it be possible that just like the other parables, these virgins have used all that they have to bless others, and hence they are blessed with extra oil? The Greek term phronimos is what is translated as wise. The interesting thing about this word is that the etymology (root word) of this term is the Greek word phren, which primarily means “midriff or diaphragm areas; the parts of the heart.” This word could imply one who is compassionate from the innermost parts. In context with the parables, they are the same as the sheep and the good stewards. The reason they have more oil than the foolish virgins is because they bless others and in return have been blessed in return. So now you ask, if they were so generous why didn’t they share their oil with the foolish ones? Again, remember that this is a parable and what is called oil might not actually be able to be shared. The irony is that the foolish virgins feel like they can ask the wise virgins for their extra oil probably implying that they know the wise virgins are extra generous. Also, this seems to imply that the wicked are more concerned with themselves being ready than others. They were willing to take others’ oil to be ready even at risk of the other virgins not being ready anymore. The root of the foolish virgins is SELFISHNESS. They only care for what happens to themselves, not others.

In conclusion, I propose that all of these parables in Matthew 25 actually illustrate the two men in the field and the two women at the mill. What Jesus is doing is saying that there will be two sets of people but they are all “believers”. They are people you will be familiar with. You will see them regularly at church. You will be on church board with them. You will play Rook and eat popcorn together on Saturday nights. But in the proceeding parables Jesus spells out what will be the difference (that He sees) between the two groups: one group will give all that they have to bless other peoples’ lives and the other group is only concerned with themselves.

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Elaine Nelson  2 days ago

There is no mention of Sabbath keepers, tithe payers, vegetarians, eschewers of jewelry, movies and fiction who are among the saved. Where is the relevance for Adventists, or is it not possible that none of this is important to God?

"To be ready" means that our daily lives should be lived with an outlook for others, rather than an inlook to our imperfections. When we take our last breath (and no one knows that day), the next moment we will be in God's presence. Concern over a "Second Coming" has little meaning to those millions who have already died, and those who will die before realizing that Second Coming. If He has come in our hearts, that is a Second Coming for us.

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Vernon P. Wagner  2 days ago

Elaine's question is profound! Every earthly religion boasts that THEY are the chosen ones. Will passports be needed in the hereafter for visiting non-SDA friends & family in heavenly kingdoms reserved for their true believers only?

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Ella M.  23 hours ago

I would agree with the gist of these two posts. There are no good works that ready us for translation other than our willingness to be led by God in our treatment of others. And even that comes from Him and builds our characters. A selfish character would not be happy in the New Earth (heaven is not our ultimate home) where all is harmonious unselfish sharing and love.
For further enlightenment that gives clear purpose to each parable, I refer you to the Desire of the Ages. This summary is exactly that, a short but poignant summary, but misses some key elements clarified by the Spirit of Prophecy and well worth the experience to review each one in the detail to which we have been endowed.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter
Many things depress those who are prone to depression, including the knowledge that one is prone to depression.

Now before we elaborate, one must explain what we mean by “prone to depression”: It's not the same as someone who gets depressed sometimes (also known as “the entire human race”). For some people it’s a natural inclination, where as others are inclined toward optimism (what I like to call “Type O's”), or anger (or “Type A's”).

A person who is prone to depression reacts differently than these people is certain situations, such as:

1) In getting a test grade that is not as high as one expected, this person reacts by:
O: Believing that a better grade can be achieved in the future by working harder or taking a different approach. Barring that, they believe there may be more constructive uses of their energies than this subject.
A: Pouring over the test answers and then lurking at the teacher’s lounge until they can, arms crossed, confront the instructor with their fervent belief that D) was just as suitable an answer to question 27 as B).
D: Spend at least a day thinking of all that might have resulted from getting the grade they had set their sights on, and acknowledging that they are failures for having done anything less.

2) When rejected by a member of the opposite gender, this person’s reaction is to:
O: Realize that this was probably not the best time to settle down and conclude that there are more figurative finned creatures in the metaphorical body of water.
A: Catalogue that person’s faults, assume a pseudonym and set about sharing them with society via the Web.
D: Compare your traits and/or achievements to someone who is having more success in their love life and deem yourself hopelessly unattractive by comparison.

3) A colleague gets promoted over you at work. This news causes a person to:
O: Congratulate them and resolve to learn from their successes.
A: Look for different job online and fantasize about thrusting their two-weeks’ notice in their supervisor’s face.
D: Stare at the computer screen the rest of the day, reading news about people more successful than you and wondering what the difference is.

4) Downsides of this personality type is:
O: There are very few negatives, but one is that unfailing optimism irritates Type As and Type Os immensely.
A: A greater set of risks, from cardiovascular disease to the possibility that one will end up confined to a room with concrete walls shared with other persons who can’t control their anger, only they’re bigger and have more tattoos.
D: One frequently comes up with what seem to them like sagacious metaphors for life (for example: “It’s a train everyone thinks they’re boarding, and only a few realize they’re standing on the tracks”) that make others want to keep them away from all sharp objects and rope.

5) Upsides to this personality include:
O: People rarely have to tell you to calm down or cheer up.
A: People eventually start giving you the biggest piece of cake at office functions just to avoid a scene.

D: One realizes earlier than most people that black goes with everything.

For those easily depressed, these things are true whether or not he believes he was allowed to bear these traits for reasons too complicated to understand by an all-powerful being he cannot see, or if he believes said mood is the random byproduct of scientific forces with no direction or purpose and under no one’s control.

But those who believe in certain types of deities – namely one that intervenes in His creations’ lives and tries to help them – have a challenge unique to them: Other believers of the other personality types who think that our personality type shouldn’t exist.

“It takes 43 muscles to frown and 17 to smile!” they say, giving us something to store away from the next round of Trivial Pursuit, but very little help in dealing with a dead-end job.

“Keep your chin up and a smile on your face!” they instruct, as though one’s facial direction/decoration was why their job was eliminated in the latest round of budget cuts.

“God loves you, so be happy!” they offer, apparently never having wondered why, if happiness was of paramount importance to Him, He made some people inclined toward another emotion.

The Bible can help where other believers may not, though. Yes, it does command thankfulness at all times, but it also shows people who aren’t feeling so thankful. The man who wrote Psalm 22 was not a person to pretend to be something he wasn’t, he was instead a person who voiced feelings such as “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.” He didn’t give up there, though, and one that feeling had been expressed, he could get on with writing Psalm 23.

Furthermore, there’s evidence that He wrote this tendency into our DNA, so some of us would retreat into our work, seeking escape from the downers in the outside world while trying to do better and better things, so we can finally walk among the others with confidence.

While we’re working on that, all we’d like is a little understanding, not to be told to smile. That might not by itself cause the inversion of our negative facial expressions, but it could hurt.

Vernon P. Wagner

Nice review of a familiar topic. Depression has many faces depending on our place in life. Worries/depression about paying my tuition at LLU were different than the pain/depression related to being widowed...both justified in their own time.

As a child, I was depressed when my SDA mother told me emphatically that the Lord was coming back any minute, and there was no time left for me to grow up. I sadly pondered that prospect for years...it did nothing to enhance my already precarious state of mental health. I'm now 73!
Dry Bones Revival – Corporate and Personal

Submitted Aug 22, 2011
By Don Watson

In Ezekiel 37 God gives the prophet a vision of scattered dry bones. In this vision, scattered bones, flesh, muscle, and skin miraculously come together and form bodies – lifeless bodies, until Ezekiel calls the Breath of God, the Holy Spirit, from the four winds to bring them to life, making them a great and mighty army. There are few passages in scripture (if any) that, so honestly and powerfully, picture the plight of God’s people. Like Israel, we are in a captivity to sin that is so deadly, God pictures us as scattered bones - not merely dead and stripped clean of any flesh or skin, but bones, dry bones. The lesson is obvious, we need to be revived – we need revival.

After reading this vision, I was struck by the importance, no, really the necessity, that if we are to live in revival, each of us must continually accept the fact that we are not merely dead, not merely bones, but dry bones - completely devoid of any life of ourselves.

I grew up in the Adventist Church, and remember often hearing sermons or series of sermons on revival. The speakers would often quote that "It was our greatest need." And it would result in my parents deciding that we would not eat sugar anymore or watch TV anymore and so I pretty much dreaded revival. Don't get me wrong, I loved going to church - well, Sabbath School anyway. Church was a bit boring but still, it was all, by and large, a good, wholesome atmosphere and community to grow up in. It was the same way with church school. I went through College in Adventist Education, and while it wasn't perfect, it gave me this rich foundation of God and purpose and a lifestyle of being good and loving others.

I wanted to say all of the above to put the rest of our discussion in perspective. In spite of my good experience in Adventist Education and the Adventist Church - and I am still a member - my life began to fall apart at the very seams, the core, the very places that should have been my strength. [I've also discovered I am not alone in what I have experienced in our church] What I am saying is this: In a church where morality and obedience is the very core of our message (We are God's Remnant who "keep the commandments of God." - Revelation 12:17), I, and thousands of others like me, have found it impossible to be moral or obedient. I realize that my personal weakness does not in itself indict the church. I accept responsibility for me, and the repentance, into which God has led me, has been such a blessing! God is teaching me that revival, which we as individuals, churches, and denominations (Not just some of us but all of us) need to constantly experience, is not "a green valley getting greener" (Roy Hession, The Calvary Road); it is not a good car getting a few final dents banged out, but a valley full of dry bones being made to live again and stand up an exceeding great army (Ezekiel 37). If revival is ever to happen and continually be sustained, we must of necessity accept the fact that we are not merely deficient, but dead. We are not merely dead but stripped to the bone of anything of use (Flesh, muscle, skin). And furthermore, we are not merely bones, but dry bones!

Please forgive me for beating this dead horse, but I don't want you to miss what I'm saying here. We need to accept that "God's call to us is NOT to become better Christians - as God sees us there are not any good Christians - but rather [And here it is . . .], Christians honestly confessing that their Christian life is a valley of dry bones and it is that very confession that qualifies us for the grace that flows from the cross and makes all things new.” (Roy Hession, The Calvary Road)

But in addition, (And this is my point) corporate Christianity [Churches and denominations] need the
same kind of "dry-bones-understanding" about who they are, and a daily repentance (a constant turning to God).

There is a lot of corporate talk about how good we are and all the wonderful things we have accomplished, and too little honest, open recognition of our sins, weaknesses, and failings - times when we have neglected people - been too busy to corporately care - hurtful in our board meetings, unforgiving in our judgments of the sins of our members. If we are not careful, there can be a corporate arrogance toward other churches and their doctrines, political positions, and practices that is nothing like the humility of Jesus. We can corporately single out the public sins and practices of the poor, the weak and the non-religious while we ignore and justify our own private sins and practices, because we are rich, religious or powerful. In seeking power and control, we have sanctified uniformity and called it unity; we have discarded the unconditional love, acceptance and forgiveness of Jesus and called it purity and faithfulness; and finally, we have turned the gospel of grace into rules, policies, manuals, and "fundamentals" rather than a real, personal, intimate, unique relationship that each of us can have directly with Jesus Christ and the Divine Trinity.

I suppose there are times we look at the complex and often corrupt workings of corporate Christianity and wonder if revival can take place at all. It almost seems hopeless, but it is not. It is not. Look at what God said to Ezekiel about the corporate mess of Israel. "Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, 'We have become old, dry bones, all hope is gone. Our nation is finished.' Therefore, prophesy to them and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'O my people [Hear the passionate love in God’s voice], I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the LORD. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, [Yahweh is the God of relationship – I AM] have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the LORD has spoken!' So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army." (Ezekiel 37:10-14)

Dear Grace Family these bones are us! But we are not without hope, He “will put [His] Spirit in us,” enter our dry bones and make us alive, a great army - it will take place.

Revival is NOT trying to correct all the foul things that make us dry bones. It is a completely different emphasis. It is a crying out after God to fill us with His Breath, His Spirit, and intimately live in us. But He can never fill a cup that is already full with us and our control, and our goodness. We must allow Him to break us and show us that we are dry bones. That is the criteria for being filled – constantly admitting we are dry bones. And that is the beginning of revival.

"I realize that my personal weakness does not in itself indict the church."

Where, but the church, did you get the idea of the necessity of "keeping the commandments" and being good was what was required? Weren't these indoctrinated at your earliest memories? Where, but the church could you have learned that all the lists of necessities for Adventists was what was expected of you?

It appears that you have had a "real" conversion; not the decision to be baptized as an Adventist, probably in your early life, but the complete turn-around in the concept which you learned of a more trusting God who accepts you in spite of your imperfections. Had you been taught this, you
would not be telling of your conversion, which is the exact description of conversion: To bring over from one belief, or view to another.

It reminds me of our pastor, shortly after he came, telling of his being raised an Adventist, all 16 years of SDA schools, and yet never being converted. Only when he was courting his Pentecostal wife, did she direct him to Galatians and Paul’s letters where he finally discovered what becoming a Christian meant. It was not behaviors, which he had been carefully taught, but the God accepts all who come to him. There are too many claiming to be good Adventists by their lifestyles, but who have not been converted.

Matt Britten 3 days ago

Thanks Don for your thoughtful presentation on revival.

Personally, I don't think most people are willing to pay the price of authentic revival. Every revival that I have read of usually starts with God showing up in power and baptising people in the Holy Spirit. (Be it individuals in private settings or corporate meetings). The effects are mindboggling and those that radically submit to God often become world changers. But to be honest, when God shows up, things get messy. Eg. bodies shake, fall; people laugh, cry, have visions, trances; some call out for mercy, others get healed, others delivered and the list goes on... While I hear more and more talk of revival (and reformation), it would appear to me that we are trying to have revival without the Holy Spirit. After all, who needs all that weird stuff anyway?!

William Noel 1 day ago

Matt,

It would appear that your knowledge of the Holy Spirit is both limited and theoretical. Let me tell you what it really is like from my experience in gift-based ministry. I've never been knocked off my feet, had a vision, etc. What I have seen is God working through me to lead people in serving others. I've long since quit counting how many times God has prepared the path ahead of us and done great things that obviously were beyond human power to accomplish. (I'd love to share stories with you but they don't want us writing books here.) The baptism of the Holy Spirit like fell on those in the upper room on Pentecost comes after an extended time of working closely with Jesus. It is the full outpouring of power once we've learned to use the limited power we are given first.

Are you ready to start experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through you? Here's how to do it.

First, make yourself available to God. Tell Him you want the Holy Spirit to lead and control you. DO NOT take a spiritual gifts test or study spiritual gifts because you need the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you instead of you getting lost in someone's concept of spiritual gifts.

Second, study the miracles of Jesus. The first result of each miracle was an improvement in a person's life. Ask God to show you how He has already empowered you to improve the lives of others around you. Now, I have to warn you about what is probably going to happen next. You're going to see a need and feel God move on your heart to try and meet that need. But you're going to feel your weakness because that need is going to be far bigger than anything you
are capable of doing. So you're going to go to your friends and ask them to work with you to meet the need.

Third, you're going to see God work through you in amazing ways. Your faith will be refreshed with an energy like you've never felt before.

Do this and you will discover what it is like to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Timo Onjukka 1 day ago

Interesting recipe, William, however rather than judging another readers response to the article, (you concluded response by previous reader was "theoretical and limited" and proceeded to give unsolicited advice) I'd rather encourage discourse on the original topic presented. This explains the request for concise brevity in comments.

Adventist Today is always looking for authors and writers, (even ones who write prescriptively ;)
I welcome you to tell some of your stories for our readers! This subject is sure to bring many responses, especially when accompanied by evidences and experiential anecdotes, which your faith community is crying out to hear.

Thank you, Don, for another excellent submission, and the attendant reminder that revival is not about us "doing it better". My dry bones are thirsty for the Isaiah 58:11 promise....

Timo Onjukka 1 day ago

Matt, i sense a delightful tongue-in-cheek aspect to your reply! It seems we share a bit of this perspective.
Seems, if we can't program, schedule, box, and mete out the requirements, we reject it.
After all, like true education (teach me HOW to think, not WHAT to think)
a free and "messy" baptism is impossible to "control" and sanction approve, judge, or claim.
Dangerous (at least to the power structure of institutional politics).

I for one, for years subscribed to "weird stuff" that is "too pentecostal" -ie the accepted "corporate teaching"- was not of God.

Now, i want to never again be accused of "being too sober".

Ella M. 23 hours ago

Don
I appreciate your profound post on acknowledging our state and long for the joy of faith renewed that lasts. I think the steps given by William were also right on, but I have seen both in the lives of some Pentecostal relatives.

One suggestion--what about changing the term "revival" as it belongs in musty tents and a by-gone age. It can hardly be comprehended by today's culture. The same goes for a lot of other words of the past like "crusades," "temperance," "health reform," etc. The principle is still there but an updated word would be more attractive and not so trite to our younger and even middle-aged members.
Hi William,

Thanks for your encouragement and advice. However, I'm not exactly a novice in re to the Holy Spirit. If you are interested to know at least some of my journey into the reviving presence of the Holy Spirit, then you may like to read a document I posted on Facebook under SDA Holy Spirit Testimonies.

The title: Matt's Personal Journey.

Blessings
A Sophisticated Adventist Apologetic for Young Life Creationism: Part I

Submitted Aug 25, 2011
By Ervin Taylor

It is interesting reading statements which are posted on ultra conservative Adventist blogs such as EducateTruth (sic) or even in articles published in the Adventist Review and, in some cases, in the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, dealing with the so-called evolution-creationism controversy currently raging in First World Adventism. From these one might get the impression that individuals opposing the contemporary scientific understanding of earth history among Adventists are uniformly uninformed, uneducated, and intellectually challenged. This is simply factually incorrect. Many are, but there are also a few detailed philosophical and theologically complex approaches whose aim is to defend the traditional Adventist Young Life Creationism (YLC) position. However, these efforts generally do not gain a wide audience in more popular Adventist media. In this blog, I seek to rectify that.

Let us consider a work of Dr. Fernando Canale, professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Theological Seminary at Andrews University. In his Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation, published in 2005, Dr. Canale advances a very sophisticated and densely-argued apologetic for the Adventist version of the YLC position. In Part I of this discussion, I would first like to present a summary of the arguments presented in this book. These comments have been taken from a review article I published in the Andrews University Seminary Studies in 2008 (Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 83-90). In Part II, I will offer my response to Dr. Canale’s propositions.

In contrast to the apologetic agenda of the SDA General Conference-sponsored Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), this book does not affirm the YLC position by using a form of ‘scientific creationism.’ Scientific creationism disputes the interpretation of the empirical data supporting the standard scientific understanding of earth history, geochronology, and evolutionary biology. Dr. Canale does not do that. Rather, he seeks to dispute the philosophical basis on which the entire modern scientific enterprise operates when dealing with these topics. He clearly distances himself from the simplistic fundamentalist apologetic approach to science typically exemplified in popular young earth and/or young life creationist works such as most of those produced by the Answers in Genesis or Institute for Creation Research organizations.

The centerpiece of his approach is to argue for a postmodern rather than modern understanding of how best to understand the natural world and all of physical reality. He states that science builds on a form of modernist understanding of knowledge. By contrast, in his view, a postmodern “philosophy of science showed that all knowledge results from contributions made by both the object and the subject…[T]o know is to interpret.”

To Dr. Canale, this means it is necessary to reinterpret ‘the meaning of objectivity.’ Modern thought, he insists, assumes the existence of an “absolute universal truth” independent from the subject’s contribution. A postmodern approach, he says “…allows for conflicting interpretations of knowledge.” and “places [the creation-evolution debate] on a different footing” (p. 9-10).

Continuing this line of thought, the author notes it is “through sensory perception that natural and historical entities are revealed to human reason (p. 20). “Scientists…believe that their information derives from ‘real’ rather than ‘imaginary’ things…They assume that real things are only those that can be ascertained through sensory perception and/or technological enhancement…Scientists
implicitly presuppose an understanding of what ‘real’ means” (p. 21)

Dr. Canale insists the development of postmodern philosophical views “mean that a theology based on the principal of sola Scripture is not irrational. What scientists call speculation or guesswork, in creating and building a comprehensive evolutionary worldview, Scripture calls divine inspiration. Evolution stands as the rational explanation produced by the scientific community in the Western world, while biblical inspiration stands as the rational explanation of the community of faith received from God by way of divine revelation and inspiration.” (p. 50-51)

“We are forced to choose and in practice accept one of the competing theories [evolution or creation] as absolutely true. This acceptance is not based on reason or method, but on faith or the relative confidence we personally have on the theory we adopt as being the most persuasive explanation of reality” (p. 74).

To reiterate this important point, Canale emphasizes the source of data on which evolutionary views are based come from a study of the natural world. In contrast, he insists creationist views “springs from divine revelation, God’s summary account of his handiwork” (p. 74). The “scientific method works from empirical data. Christian theology, on the other hand, works from data believed to be supernaturally revealed.” (p. 91)

Based on this line of argument, the author insists that “[C]reationists have a broader index of reality than evolutionists. The former includes God and his revelation, while the latter excludes them. This divergence about the index of reality becomes the leading macro-hermeneutical difference between the two conflicting metanarratives. Creation and evolution are not only competing in the scientific attempt to interpret the history of our planet, but, as they elicit our assent, they become metanarratives we accept by faith and use to build our understanding of the world and of Christian theology” (pp.74-75). He later elaborates that view by suggesting “[s]cientific data originates from sensory-perception experiences. Theological data originates from divine revelation and inspiration. For this reason, complementarity is not possible.” (p. 102)

The author posits that “The truth is that each [evolution and creation] is an equally persuasive account of reality as a whole. The conflict between them…will never be solved rationally, only eschatologically” (p. 75). In a footnote, Dr. Canale explains this statement by suggesting, “the creation theory will be corroborated and verified” only when God manifests himself “in space and time at the end of human history” (footnote 84, p. 85).

Since its origins, Adventism “worked from a specific macro-hermeneutical perspective that E.G. White called the ‘pillars’ of Adventist faith…[the] Sanctuary, the “Three Angels’ Messages, the Sabbath, and the non-immortality of the soul.” (p. 107). Because of this, the question Dr. Canale says is, “not merely whether evolution is compatible with the Genesis account of creation, but whether evolution is coherent with the Adventist theological system of beliefs” (p. 136). He admits “Adventist theology arose from the naïve assumption that Scripture reveals things as they really are…[The] “doctrine of the Sanctuary, a pillar of Adventist theology, opened to view a complete system of theology and philosophy.” (p. 137). This ‘complete system of theology and philosophy’ is better known to Adventists as the “Great Controversy” or as Dr. Canale would characterize it the “Great Controversy metanarrative.”

In a summary comment, Dr. Canale, suggests that, “evolutionary theory challenges much more than the deep historical-theological meaning of Gen[esis] 1-2. It calls for a wholesale deconstruction and reinterpretation of the fundamental principles of Adventist theology and the rejection of the historical understanding of salvation as presented in Scripture. Accommodation to evolutionary
history implies rejecting and replacing the theological revolution from which Adventism originated. In turn, the community will lose the uniqueness that is its reason for existing.” (p. 139)

Part II of this blog will comment on the propositions Dr. Canale advances in this work.

Kevin Riley 2 days ago

He may be right, but I am not sure our pioneers would have agreed. I have found a couple of places in our early publications where it is asserted that the believer accepts the Bible without needing proof, but believes God to be truthful. But, they also go on to say that proof of the Bible's veracity is necessary for convincing unbelievers. That suggests that we have from the beginning accepted there is a connection between what the Bible says and what can be proven from the world around us. To disconnect the two is to admit that the Bible is merely a myth - that it conveys ultimate Truth, but not everyday truth. I suspect that many on all sides in adventism are unwilling to go down that road.

pagophilus 2 days ago

You may well call Dr Canale's viewpoint sophisticated, but the same can be said of a prostitute in a short skirt, high heels and a cigar in her mouth.

Basically what her's trying to say, in a "sophisticated" scholarly fashion, is that:

1) Genesis and the rest of the Bible does not really mean what it says, that God created everything in 6 literal days about 6000 years ago.
and
2) Genesis and the rest of the Bible can be twisted to agree with modern "scientific" views that the earth and universe are billions of years old and formed themselves, and life subsequently formed itself too.

It's really not so sophisticated. We can see through it.

It looks like you will continue to flog this dead horse until you get the Adventist Church proper to acknowledge an evolutionary, long-age explanation for our existence. Well, you should know by now Ervin that it isn't going to happen. Why not find a church which agrees with your position rather than continually trying to destroy this one?

Ian Brown 1 day ago

I am not sure that you understand Canale's viewpoint. As far as I know, Canale does advocate a 6 day creation and a young earth. Thus, Dr. Taylor's title.

Elaine Nelson 2 days ago

You are probably right: the Adventist church will never change its position on young earth creation.

However, that does not mean that Adventism will not continue to lose thinking and educated
members, nor attract the same. It may become like the JWs where higher education is actively
discouraged as it is a perfect medium for mind control. This is what is being actively encouraged by
the new GC president: no non-SDA books or speakers.

One need only see the greatest number of converts are in the countries with a much lower level of
literacy. Why would that be?

Nathan Schilt 1 day ago

Do you really want to go there, Elaine? From what demographic do Democrats get their greatest
number of converts?: Overwhelmingly it is the least educated and least informed. The issue, in
my opinion, is not the degree to which one commits to rational or irrational beliefs. Rather, the
problem is that the natural constituencies of "command and control" religions, like those of
"command and control" governments, are those who perceive themselves as powerless victims of
sinister forces that can only be countered by concentrated power and authority. "Command and
control" organizations are, almost by definition, perfect media for mind control. You happen to
like that on the political level because command and control politicians share your Truth claims.
You hate it in religion because traditional religions oppose your Truth claims. The clients of
command and control organizations and governments always tend to be less educated,
less informed, and less resistant to political and religious snake oil.

One need hardly scratch the surface of intellectual class assumptions and beliefs to see that
literacy is not a bulwark against "kooky" beliefs and opinions. Furthermore, YLC and excellent
education traveled together quite comfortably in SDA higher education until some SDA
scientists who had become evangelical about evolution were confronted by YLC
evangelists. Worshipping the goddess of reason is not an antidote for religious authoritarianism.

What evidence do you have, Elaine, that FB #6 is producing a brain drain in Adventism?
You are simply projecting your personal feelings as facts. Were that the case, would you not
expect that Adventist educators would be leading the exodus? I don't see that happening.

Doctorf Doctorf1 1 day ago

Nate,

I tend to agree with you that education does not necessarily insulate one from the propensity
to accept kooky beliefs. Look at Al Gore and his immersion in environmental extremism. The
CERN is now having to revamp its models and finally admit the "heliocentric" model for
climate change is more plausible as opposed to the "anthropocentric" model for climate
change. The AGW theory is a classic demonstration of what happens when politics, personal
bias against human economic activity and science are mixed. When I first learned about the
AGW theory my reaction was much like Michael Crighton's. To think that in 4 billion yrs
of earth's history the climate has only radically changed because of human activity seemed
silly. Furthermore, the idea that we can "control or manipulate" global temperatures by
increasing or decreasing particular human activity seemed ridiculous given the massive forces
called the sun and water vapor have on climate. There are many educated people that have
lent their voices to arguments that while climate changes, humans have nothing to do with it.
Climate change was going on long before we ever got here.
Vernon P. Wagner 2 days ago

Dr. Canale is on target, IMHO. The late, great Dr. Jack Provonsha held similar views...spoken to me in whispers. However, those who firmly believe in the two versions of creation in Genisis 1 & 2, will never accept scientific discoveries to the contrary. Should belief in either long, or short creation have a direct bearing on the plan of redemption? Are there no other beliefs of substance in SDA teachings to justify membership? Life on this planet is marvelous regardless of how it happened, or who put their tribal legends down on clay tablets, and papyrus.

Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

Nathan, this is the latest information on educational level of the parties:

"So who's smarter, Democrats or Republicans?
That's quite the controversial question, of course. According to a blogger at Watchblog.com, though, it seems that Democrats are more educated than Republicans. Or hey, let me rephrase that. People in the “blue states” (states that typically vote Democratic) are collectively more educated than people in the “red states” (states that typically vote Republican).

According to Watchblog.com:

- States that voted for Kerry in 2004 had 21 percent more college graduates than states that voted for Bush.
- The states that ranked the lowest for high school and college graduates were all red states.
- Eight out of 10 of the states that ranked the highest for high school college graduates were blue states. (The number one state, by far, is Colorado — technically a red state because it went for Bush by a small margin, but effectively a “purple” state because it’s become so politically mixed.)

Nathan Schilt 21 hours ago

Elaine - please don't insult our intelligence! States that voted for Kerry were the most populous states. Of course they had more college graduates. They also had more high school drop-outs and more people who were government dependents. Without poorly educated dependents of the government, easily manipulated by class warfare rhetoric, the Democrats would lose their base. Assuming that there is fairly good correlation between income and education, how many elections do you think Democrats would win if only taxpayers were allowed to vote? If you guessed a figure near zero, go to the head of the class. You are smarter than your use of numbers suggests.

Both authoritarian governments and authoritarian religions depend for their power on controlling information inputs and keeping their subjects ignorant.
Ella M.  

How is the political debate relevant to the topic?

I found Dr. Canale's book fascinating and am puzzled as to why it causes such a problem to creationists. Worldviews are highly subjective, and one thing it says to me is that we choose what to believe.

After following a worldview such as the "scientific" one for most of one's education and being around people who believe the same, one would easily be "brainwashed" to believe there is no answer other than the scientific one and become an evangelist for evolution. And, yes, the same goes for the creationist who stays inside their own group. The same for those who stay within their own worldview from Muslims to Mormons. Very few scientists go outside their group as well.

When I sense the size of the cosmos and the smallness of humans, I just cannot believe that they can comprehend the material evidence or know how to interpret that evidence. Call me anti-intellectual, but I can't believe my computer evolved any more than life did. I will go with the spiritual, and maybe that makes me postmodern.

For all we know the adversary could have attempted some sort of creation before Eden or after the fall. We cannot know the laws that existed before the fall and thus depend on modern dating methods. We don't even comprehend all the laws that govern the universe now or what it is made of. There are too many questions to have all the answers.

Vernon P. Wagner  

An excellent description of our unrealistic human hubris to think we know it all.

If the 'adversary' was called Lucifer (Light Bearer), he/it would have possessed a most critical part of the creative process...hence, his/its' exalted ego. We tiny, ephemeral Primates have no idea as to how the 'Light Bearer' may have altered life as we know it...past & present.

Phillip Brantley  

Here is the link to Dr. Canale's three-part essay:

http://www.auss.info/auss_publication.php?other_through=1&pub_type=article&first_through=&nr_records=&hash=&journal=1&pref_disp_num=&status_search=canale&field=All&action=Search+articles&author=&volume=&year=&topic=

Doctorf Doctorf1  

Canale says "Theological data originates from divine revelation and inspiration. For this reason, complementarity is not possible." (p. 102)]"  

Theological data? Is he kidding? So I am to accept what is written in the bible such as the creation narrative which is clearly a story as data? Scientific data is quantititative and that is how we understand the natural world. Canale is saying that SDA believers can choose to accept an alternative reality portrayed in the bible as a paradigm and it is every bit as legitimate as the models
derived from real science. It amazes me that theological types such as Canale will twist like flag in the wind to keep the believers in line and to accept the SDA interpretation of the history of the natural world.

David 1 day ago

Doctorf says “Scientific data is quantitative and that is how we understand the natural world”, an observation to your statement. **Scientific data is not only quantitative but more important has to be qualitative.** For example, we know that less than 30% of the “scientific medical publications” are sustainable by the proof of time. They are not reproducible. **The highest credit to a scientific experiment or observation is when it can be reproducible over and over again.** Now my question for you is what evidence you have that evolution is a reproducible experiment so we can give the highest level of credibility?

Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

Interesting assessments.

Theology is man's construction, and to place it on a pedestal as being unquestioned is childish. God is not a theologian, nor did God establish religion. All are man's invention.

Theology is the study of God. Does God need to study himself? Religion has always been man's invention and his approach to god(s) is his effort to appease the gods or obey them.

The Bible was not written by God in the King's English or Hebrew. It was all written by man, and because men are changeable, fallible, and never perfect, they wrote about their god as they believed him to be. "No one has seen God" yet men claim to be able to read his mind.

Science is the study of things observed in nature and theories are developed about those observations, repeated often enough to give some certainty. That they cannot sustain the proof of time is because new discoveries are constantly changing while the Bible story of Creation cannot be changed: it is static. The creation described in the Bible is most certainly not reproducible, so to compare it with evolution as also being not reproducible is to claim that neither are!

Vernon P. Wagner 22 hours ago

Once again, Elaine has echoed my thoughts exactly. I rarely waste time in a church built with hands, but when I do, I cringe each time I hear the Bible referred to as the 'Word of God.'

Nothing in science can be 'discovered' that was not created...in days, or eons! Sadly, the religious community fails to recognize that science IS divine revelation.

Ella M. 1 day ago

I disagree. God is not man's construction. Theology is man's study of God based on ancient writings. We may choose to not have faith that a spirit led those who wrote them, and that is all right. But it shouldn't be forced on others any more than religion should. Yet science without...
proof is forced on us through all public media and schools. Those who don't buy it are made to look like fools and verbally persecuted. It is not strange that some react in unChristian ways, and this makes it worse for all believers.

Let me repeat your last paragraph with a different twist. Theology is the study of God as observed in nature, ancient writings, and morality, and doctrines are developed about those observations. They sustain the proof of time because the basics do not change as God does not change. What changes is human knowledge and interpretation of those things. When accompanied by the Holy Spirit fresh interpretations will change lives. When it is not led by the Spirit it will destroy lives.

David

1 day ago

Christians accepts the statement given by the author of the Hebrews “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” as well the one wrote by Paul “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, Evolution is build up in interpretation that could happen in the past that requires the same or more faith that ones who believe in the Bible. Until now there is no evidence of reproducible prove of evolution. Show me where a reproducible evidence of evolution is, and I will believe. All the attempts until now were futile. To say the evolution is base in science is not accurate; evolution is base in the interpretation of events of the past with a lot of imagination speculation and for sure also faith.

Elaine Nelson

1 day ago

Show me where there is reproducible evidence of creation. Where is the model? The SDA Geoscience Research Institution has said they have no model. Do you have one?

David

23 hours ago

Elaine I just wrote that Christians believe by faith in the Creation and the all the biblical record, but the evolutionist claim the evolution is base in science. But is they cannot prove it. So don’t give the credit of science to something that cannot be proved.

Trevor Hammond

23 hours ago

Mrs Nelson says: "However, that does not mean that Adventism will not continue to lose thinking and educated members, nor attract the same. It may become like the JW's where higher education is actively discouraged as it is a perfect medium for mind control."

Now let me get this straight. According to Mrs. Nelson, secular education is more powerful than the Holy Spirit whom some of us believe is supposed to provide discernment between truth and error - light and darkness, and the One who leads us to salvation by God’s Grace in Christ Jesus. If this - ‘Elaine’s Way’ - was the ‘truth’ - then there’s no reason to invest in doing what we do as a Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. All we have to do (according to Mrs. Nelson) is to sit long enough on some campus and ‘voila’ something will happen which will bring forth ‘truth’ via
the secular education curriculum to those seek it. (Like the amoeba perhaps as it waits for something to happen - some change to take place - but it ain't).

Remember too, that they don’t even call upon God the Holy Spirit in prayer when embarking on a study of the Holy Bible at such institutions yet enlightenment is purported to be received at this level – albeit not all from God. Satan has his own counterfeit enlightenment department which educates to destroy true faith in God. Buying power, worldly pleasure and treasure, are some the opportunistic bugs which infect many with the dreaded ‘Affluenza’ virus which alters the minds of those that succumb to it. This type of pseudo-truth is contrary to what Jesus himself taught.  

[John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”]

Don’t get me wrong. We all know that education has its very important place in the Christian life but within education itself there is NO salvation or absolute truth. This can only be found in our God – Jesus Christ. After all, let’s be honest and reasonable, how can studying a fossil be the deciding factor between what is truth and what defines error. Perhaps this conjecture is but only stuff that the said fossils dream of.

T

Elaine the SDA church has a record to improve the level of education around the globe, but even if you question that, is good to remember that God will accomplish more for an educated person under his guidance that an “independent educated person”

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”[c]

....Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.

Elaine Nelson

Does prayer in the school improve the students abilities? Prayer has often been a mantra: we pray, and then go about our business and the prayer is a mere formality. Prayer should be a sincere need of an individual, and public prayer has little place in Jesus' teachings. If prayer assured only truth is taught who is the judge of truth?

Education is risky if one wishes to retain the same prejudices, ideas and thoughts that originated in childhood. Education should elevate one to more knowledge, not simply repeat old ideas. Critical thinking also may cause one to question early teachings. In fact, if it doesn't why seek education? Unless one is presented with new ideas, how can he meet the challenge when attempting to convert
someone? How will he answer if he cannot understand them?

Vernon P. Wagner 22 hours ago

I spent my first 6 years in public schools. I'd never seen public prayer in a school until 7th grade, and it was also the first time I'd seen classmates sneak off to smoke during recess. Didn't take long to make me miss my less religious pals in public school.

Nathan Schilt 21 hours ago

And your point, Vernon, would be what - that prayer isn't a goodness pill...or that kids in your junior high days were more likely to experiment with smoking in the 7th grade than in the 5th or 6th grade (What a shocker!)...or that religion and school prayer make kids want to smoke? Or do you just want use anecdotal evidence to undermine simple faith in prayer?

Vernon P. Wagner 17 hours ago

The 'anecdotal evidence' caused me to break down in tears when I told the teacher what the boys were doing. I'd come from a home where Dad smoked 3 packs a day, and drank himself into oblivion. I expected SDA schools to be different. I was serious about becoming an SDA, but those raised in the Church were much less interested. Seeing class leaders acting the same as those in public school was a downer, because the kids there had not pretended to be holy. Faith in prayer is fine...some answered...some not, but I've discovered the Lord generally opens doors for those who 'push' on them first. Public prayer just doesn't do it, IMHO.

In SDA schools we were often reminded to pray for the Lord to find us a life companion. I guess He was busy elsewhere in the Universe, because very few of us had that prayer answered. What we thought was 'God's Will' turned out to be raging hormones.

David 22 hours ago

Genuine conversion to Christianity is not accomplished good arguments... no Elaine is done by the power of the Holy Spirit and a person who allowed to be guide. By experience I can tell you that sincere pray and life is more effective than any argument. The results could be greater if somebody is educated and guide by the Holy Spirit. Look Paul.

Kevin Riley 19 hours ago

Perhaps the same condition should be placed on discussion here as in many classrooms - you need to read the book/article before you can share your opinion on it. Reading many of the comments above, I get the impression that the posters have not read any of Canale's writings. Canale's position that we should base our beliefs, and the hermeneutics and epistemology underlying them, solely on a position of 'sola scriptura' is an interesting one, so I would encourage everyone to read what he has written. I would really like to see how he argues for the use of Ellen White in such a scheme, but that is a different debate. I suspect his position would actually cause as much grief to SDA administrators as it might to theistic evolutionists, if either camp were to read and
comprehend what he is suggesting. Not only must we question whether science agrees with the Bible, but whether SDA doctrines also line up with a 'sola scriptura' position.

Ervin Taylor
17 hours ago

I would like to second the comment of Mr. Riley. For example, it appears that "pagophilus" completely and totally misunderstood Dr. Canale's arguments. Let us be clear, Dr. Canale is writing to support--repeat, support--the views of conservative Adventists concerning young life creationism. He opposes--repeat opposes--the reality of "deep time" in the geological record and organic evolution in the biological world. In Part II of this topic, I will suggest why one might wish to disagree with Dr. Canale's understandings.

Trevor Hammond
15 hours ago

RE Mrs. Ella M's comment: "Very few scientists go outside their group as well."
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This sums-up for me the way tertiary institutions can so easily negatively 'influence' (brainwash) many who pass through their brain reassignment programs which they offer, even at a huge 'cost' to students/parents, both financially and spiritually. Many lose faith in God at these places of (higher?) learning not because of 'enlightenment' as purported; but by 'reassignment'. Thank God (Praise God!) that so many still make it through and retain their faith in God. The stakes are high: many exchange their souls for a 'pot' of anti-God education and will pay dearly for it. It must really break the hearts (and pockets) of good God-fearing Christian parents looking out for the best for the kids they love so dearly. ...But the professors at some of these dodgy institutions say: "Come unto me..." – which in a few months time translates into a qualified capped 'infidel' who bows down to that particular school of thought. God bless all the Christian Campus Ministries who are our frontline footmen at the very gates of hell - our prayers are with you...

Trevor Hammond
2 hours ago

I have a question for the honourable Dr. Taylor - "Was there death before the FALL of man: before Adam and Eve sinned?" and "Who, or what is it, that died?"

T

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
Where Conviction Meets Cabernet:

The *Napa Valley Register* published August 21, 2011, an online article on vineyards and subsequent wineries encroaching on Angwin, the home of Pacific Union College (PUC). A light and breezy overview is presented on the surprising acceptance of vineyards by the Adventist community and the non-issue of Angwin's deep religious history creating any issues in the minds of owners of the new vineyards.

Herb Ford, professor emeritus of PUC and former president of the Angwin Community Council is quoted as stating the College has been the backbone and keeper of Angwin for many years. Read more light and informative comments on Adventists and the changing Angwin community.

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**Elaine Nelson**  
5 days ago

Surely, Jews had vineyards else from where did the wine come that the wedding guests had been drinking? Did Jesus ever command total abstinence? Jews have always drunk wine. Evidently one of the Jewish customs not followed by Adventism when they brought along many other Jewish rules.

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**Glenn Hansen**  
4 days ago

One good reason that SDA and winemakers get along so well is because Adventists have been much involved in developing the wine making industry in the Napa Valley area. Many of the contractors and workers who have been building the wineries, tasting rooms, wine cellars, and other elements of the industry are SDA people. The lifestyle enjoyed by many Adventists in the Napa Valley area is dependent on the winemaking industry.

St Helena hospital has been taking money from the wine industry for decades.

College students who may have grown up in a home environment hostile to alcohol are exposed to a culture which glamorizes alcohol. This has not been without consequences. In just one year, during the 1980s, 4 or 5 PUC students were killed in alcohol related accidents.

I hope that PUC during student orientation, addresses the issue of alcohol consumption, in a realistic manner. Rather than asking students if they drink alcohol, they should be asking how much alcohol they drink. Wine is everywhere in the Napa Valley. PUC should really consider moving.

They should sell the land to a syndicate not directly related to the wine industry, take the money, and run far away.

The Christian Brothers, who pioneered winemaking in the Napa Valley, sold much of their substantial holdings in the 1980s. Price estimates exceeded half a billion dollars. They were
originally a teaching order and felt that winemaking had become a distraction from their primary mission.

Frankly, the Napa Valley is a bad environment for SDA youth.

Elaine Nelson
4 days ago

"Frankly, the Napa Valley is a bad environment for SDA youth."

Please offer a suggestion, including donations sizable to cover the moving of PUC to another less "sinful" site. Would you care to estimate the amount of money needed for such a move? Where is a more "Adventist" location to be found?:

The preferred drink for college students is beer, not wine, so to confuse the near-by location of wineries with student's alcohol deaths has not been confirmed. If you have concrete facts, please supply them and not merely suggest possibilities. The close proximity of wine-tasting is no closer than the nearest St. Helena liquor stores.

When PUC and many SDA colleges were built they were far from cities specifically to avoid the "sinful" cities. As populations grew and spread out many of these schools had an entirely different environment than when they were built nearly 100 years ago. Such a suggestion to "move" the school is laughable on its face. Alternatively, you could make that suggestion to the PUC conference officials for their response.

Edwin A. Schwisow
2 days ago

Adventist colleges and universities seem to thrive best in semi-rural areas where land and rent is still affordable, yet where city residents can still reasonably commute in to attend. An Adventist college or university may lack one of these two advantages and still thrive, but if it lacks both, it will probably not survive.

Markham
1 day ago

If the remarks by Hansen are correct it may well be time for PUC to sell its property, assuming it's worth a bundle, and toddle off to a more inspiring environment.
Is there any inclination to entertain that idea by SDA leadership?

Elaine Nelson
1 day ago

Markham, why not compute the figures in $\$ and present it to the leadership. First, a buyer must be found in today's market; then a suitable location (location, location, location); and the sale price must be equivalent to new property and replacement. If you are familiar with the Napa Valley, you should know you're in the billions already. Your tithe money?
You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
Okay, this is a book about politics, and politics doesn't affect religion these days, right? It does, of course, and has as long as both have existed—so much so, that the Founding Fathers ruled that they should be sent to their respective corners of society's boxing ring and NEVER be allowed to engage in tag-team competition. That they still try is confirmation of the natural fatal attraction of the two, and the need for society to discourage their destructive cohabitation.

This book is highly recommended, rating near five stars on Amazon.com, though the writer is himself a liberal, and therefore not "unbiased." Still, the book is written in a critical way by a liberal, bewailing his class's own departure from historical orthodoxy and avoiding the almost kneejerk tendency in today's America to blame the "other side." A confirmed conservative reader will enjoy the book, if only to bask in the liberals' confessional squirm!

But I digress. The author's primary thesis is that while America began as a "liberal" nation in a sea of monarchist warmongers, the "liberal class" in recent decades has been perverted, primarily during the 1960s, and that the caricatures of liberals today painted by self-avowed conservatives are in some cases well-deserved—not because liberalism is wrong, but because liberalism sold out.

In some ways the hypothesis fits the experience of Adventism during that same decade, as it clearly moved from sectarian status, to the mainstream—a move toward the gentler side of Christianity, under the slogan “The Caring Church.” This metamorphosis continued haltingly through the 1970s, but returned to a more “tough love,” disciplinarian approach that continues in many Adventist congregations to this day. Liberal Adventism was essentially aborted, and that which is portrayed as “liberalism” by today’s conservatives is often more about liberalism’s bathwater than about its baby.

A reading of this book will help any reader begin to assimilate a fairer picture of the basic elements of American liberalism—where the attributes of a Dwight Eisenhower are seen as more endemic of liberalism than those of a Bill Clinton; where a Reuben R. Figuhr is seen as a better liberal fit than a Dale Ratzlaff.

In essence, the Liberal Class has traditionally favored favors greater local control of administration, elimination of most hierarchical power, freedom of expression (including expression of new and perhaps untested insights, without fear of being branded as un-American or heretical), and concentration on nurture over compulsion; of diplomacy over war; of discussion over issuing of edicts. Interestingly enough, many so-called “conservatives” today both in the church and in the nation favor several, if not all, of these basic values.

The book is terse rather than florid, logical rather than expansive, and as such is a useful adjunct to study for any Adventist interested in tracing the history (as seen from within) of the traditional Liberal Class in America. That it does not blame the “other side” for its downfall is a refreshing bonus.
Dissecting a Frog

Submitted Aug 19, 2011
By Nathan Brown

We begin with a whole frog* and with a sharp scalpel, tweezers and magnifying glass slowly peel away layers, muscles, blood vessels and organs, laying each piece carefully aside and cutting deeper. By examining the contents of the tiny stomach, we are able to identify some of the small bugs the frog had eaten.

Perhaps we identify the little froggy heart. Though we call it a heart, it bears little resemblance to the ox heart we may have dissected the previous week. It is so called more for function than form—while bearing many similarities, the circulatory system of a large warm-blooded mammal works differently to that of a small cold-blooded amphibian.

And so it goes through the different pieces of what was a frog. After a time of careful study, we may have a much greater knowledge of frog componentry. For those studying these creatures, such knowledge can be important in better understanding how a frog moves, eat and lives.

But at the end of the process we do not have a frog. Instead we have a small pile of rather unattractive mushy stuff that once was a living, breathing, hopping frog. The process of exploration has also been a process of destruction.

Reading is a difficult task. We are told we learn how to read in the early years of primary (grade) school but we bring a lifetime of learning to reading and understanding. To do it well, reading is something that must be practised with care and patience. And few of us do it well.

When reading the Bible we often assume the most profitable form of study is to take it apart piece-by-piece — perhaps delving into the meanings of the original languages — and the meaning will become clear. With such a background, we tend to then bring this way of reading to other pieces of writing, becoming literal, word-by-word readers. But this is just one way of reading. And, while useful to varying degrees, it can be likened to dissecting a frog.

To see a frog hopping across the dewy morning grass, frog-kicking across a shaded stream or lying in wait for a small insect — to hear a frog croaking in appreciation of an approaching rainstorm or crying out in distress as it tries to escape a predator — is a long way from the dissection lab. The frog in context is a wonder of creation, a living reality that all the dissection in all the high school science departments of the world could never discover.

Context is important. Some would go so far as to argue this realisation renders the making of worthwhile dictionaries near impossible. The use of language changes with time and words can have a variety of meaning at any given point in time, depending on context. As such, an appreciation of context is vital to the careful reader’s task.

For example, the best tool for understanding a single Bible text is an overview of the Bible as a whole, its direction, purposes and overarching themes. To explore a word, sentence or verse apart from its context can give shades of meaning. But if when taken back to that context the ‘dissected’
meaning is inconsistent with the larger meaning of the chapter or book from which it was extracted, to insist on that meaning is absurd — and a serious example of bad reading.

Which is why I am surprised — in working with our church magazines — when an article is read as somehow undermining the core beliefs of Christianity and the church. Why would a magazine whose primary focus is to share the good news of the church, encourage the faith of church members and further the kingdom of God, simultaneously work to undermine that (consider Matthew 12:25)? The context must guide the reading.

Yes, as writers, we struggle with inexactness. We don’t always express things as well as we might. But we also need readers who will read with broadness of mind and openness of heart. And together we can all continue to learn how better to read — and not just to dissect, but to live it.

*Note: This column is not about frogs. And no frogs were harmed in the writing process.

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Ella M. 1 week ago Reply

Your frog metaphor is excellent and one I have used as well when discussing the Bible. How can we get this message out? The Bible needs to be taken as a whole to be understood as a living book and not analyzed and dissected til there is nothing left but a confusion of words on paper.

Take the Bible as a whole—I think the Adventist church pioneers had this in mind when they rejected the idea of an eternally-burning hell for the wicked. There are places in the Bible that cannot be taken literally but are metaphors, allegories, and symbols. But this does not include the life stories of real people who lived and wrote about their experiences in their own languages and settings; though even those have parallels in human history to the current day.

The Bible is an overview of God's love to humans.

Steve Billiter 1 week ago Reply

“Why would a magazine whose primary focus is to share the good news of the church, encourage the faith of church members and further the kingdom of God, simultaneously work to undermine that (consider Matthew 12:25)? The context must guide the reading.”

I've seen many articles that do not support the Adventist mission, and disagree with Scripture and Ellen White. For example, there was one supporting drummers and drums in the Review some years ago, and even sported a picture of a young drummer with tattoos! (Tony Yang, 2008, http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=2008-1511&page=28) The writer says, “After praying for a drummer for a few weeks, I was starting to realize how hard it was to find a drummer, let alone a good one.”

While the story is “good” in that a young person joins the church who plays drums, the concept of drumming in church is presented as if it were acceptable praise to God when it is not. I shudder to think of the evil results of this article as Adventist worship leaders take solace from this misleading work and choose to continue their baleful influence.

Indeed, the magazine articles that drift the furthest away from solid Adventist pillars of faith are Spectrum, and this one, Adventist Today, the bastions of liberalism in the church. The articles that undermine the true mission of the church that originate from these two publications are simply too numerous to list. As a defender of all the 28 beliefs, Present Truth, traditional Adventist teachings on Daniel and the Revelation, and not least—Ellen G. White, I’m surprised that I’m not censured—at least not yet, here. I simply do not have time to post on Spectrum as
well. My prayer and hope is that some reading will see glimmers of truth and decide to truly commit to Jesus and follow Bible truth.

Kevin Riley  
1 week ago  
I began the study of Greek with the hope that it would clear up the messiness and inconsistencies I found in the English Bibles I read. Perhaps the fear I had when I began the study of Hebrew a year later that knowing one more biblical language would lead to the discovery of yet more inconsistencies and yet more messiness indicates how effectively my hope had been crushed. Yet, 21 years after my last Greek and Hebrew class, and 16 years after resigning as a pastor, I cannot bring myself to regret studying either language, and still spend time to ensure my knowledge of Greek does not entirely die. I still have hopes of relearning Hebrew and learning Latin in my retirement years - that’s when I believe I will again have time for such activities. Knowing some Greek does help with understanding some parts of the Bible. But I have found my other years of study in social science also helps. In fact, life itself seems to help by teaching me more about how life really works. Sometimes that makes the Bible clearer, sometimes it forces me to look again at what the Bible says. Both are good.

During a couple of years when I was doing research for my PhD, before everything (or even anything) had fallen into place, I often took refuge in the old saying that "confusion is the beginning of wisdom". Sometimes I have to remember that when I read the Bible. If my confusion leads me to more study, then it is a good thing. If my continued confusion leads me to talk to God, that is an even better thing. I am grateful for the many people who have commented on the Bible and shared their understanding. Some of my favourite authors are people I disagree with because they push me to face the inconsistencies in my own understanding of the Bible. Standing back and remembering the wider context is helpful. If what I understand from a text does not fit with the bigger picture of God as our creator and redeemer, then perhaps I need to look again. Or sometimes just leave it alone until more information, or more experience, makes it clearer.

As I deal with the trauma of realising that the year I turn 50 is approaching with a rapidity I find disturbing, I also find that I am becoming more willing to allow God, and life, to bring answers more slowly than I once found comfortable. Perhaps I am becoming reconciled to the fact that I will die not knowing everything. God is good, He loves me, He is in control - the rest (even the bits in the Bible) is just 'nice to know' rather than 'need to know'.

Steve Billiter  
1 week ago  
Kevin, what a sad story you tell. Understanding the original languages is not the key to understanding the Bible--it is important though to understand the mistranslations of words in vital doctrines and certain other places even in the best Bible, the KJV and its variants (AKJV, KJV2000, NKJV). Using modern versions such as the NIV will certainly lead to confusion.

You said, “I often took refuge in the old saying that "confusion is the beginning of wisdom". While your meaning seems to make some sense, it just does not line up Scripturally. Not understanding is not confusion—confusion is a false understanding of the Bible—errors if you please. Babylon means confusion. We may at first puzzle over a text, but that is not confusion by any means. Pro 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.
Steve Biliter

Good article Nathan—and I agree wholeheartedly with what you say about taking the whole Bible as an overview and seeking to understand the context in which the verse or verses are contained. However, what is not stated in what concerns me, and I quote,

“For example, the best tool for understanding a single Bible text is an overview of the Bible as a whole, its direction, purposes and overarching themes. To explore a word, sentence or verse apart from its context can give shades of meaning. But if when taken back to that context the ‘dissected’ meaning is inconsistent with the larger meaning of the chapter or book from which it was extracted, to insist on that meaning is absurd — and a serious example of bad reading.”

No so. The best and most foundational tool that we must bring to God first is a seeking and longing after Him—a desire for righteousness. We must humbly come to Him who gave the Word asking God to reveal its meanings to us. When we are converted as a consequence of studying God’s word and are baptized—we then have the fuller guidance of the Holy Spirit to help our studies.

John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

1Cor. 2:14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

These verses speak of what I previously stated. Obedience to Him and that desire to be like Jesus will open the door to the great truths of the Bible where no humanistic methods will work. Dissecting a frog as an analogy for correct Biblical understanding gives the impression that we can do it our way—apart from how God’s says we must seek Him to understand His Word. Yes, context is important in the overall picture, and I also note you have left out another Biblical principle that is vital to understanding truth, and that is simply letting the Bible interpret itself:

Isa 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

Isa 28:10 For precept must be on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, and there a little:

While learning from good teachers is vital, we should also be “weaned from the breast” and do our own studies under God’s guidance. Difficult verses—especially that of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation require “line upon line” “precept upon precept” and “here a little, and there a little,” going to the proper places in Scripture that interpret the chosen texts. Sadly Nathan, not once have you given Bible or EGW references in its proper context in just how we are to understand God’s Word to the saving of our souls. Instead, we see a human attempt to put only man’s limited measuring stick on something that is eternal truth—that which we should handle with the utmost reverence and awe coming to Him only for understanding.

He who will study the Bible with a humble and teachable spirit will find it a sure guide, pointing out the way of life with unfailing accuracy. But what does your study of the Bible avail, brethren and sisters, unless you practice the truths it teaches? That holy book contains nothing that is nonessential; nothing is revealed that has not a bearing upon our actual lives. The deeper our love for Jesus, the more highly we shall regard that word as the voice of God directly to us. {5T 303.2}
Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost. The ingenuity of men has been exercised for ages to measure the Word of God by their finite minds and limited comprehension. If the Lord, the Author of the Living oracles, would throw back the curtain and reveal His wisdom and His glory before them, they would shrink into nothingness and exclaim as did Isaiah, ‘I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips’ (Isa. 6:5).” — Ms 16, 1888; (ISM 15-18).

(Written at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the autumn of 1888.)

Thomas "Vastergotland"

Steve,

Isaiah 28 is a perfect example of a chapter that requires its context. If you consider even the full paragraph, you will find that God is looking at the leaders in Israel including its priests, and He finds that they are all drunk. They give judgement while being to drunk to stand up straight. God then asks, who is teachable? Maybe the smal children are sober enough to listen.

Then verse 11-13

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people,

12 To whom He said, “This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,”

And, “This is the refreshing”;

Yet they would not hear.

13 But the word of the LORD was to them,

“Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little,”

That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

You may notice in verse 12, God clearly tells the people 'rest and refreshing for the weary', but the people are too drunk to hear. Verse 13 explains that what they understood from Gods clear word offering rest and refreshment was "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little".

It is clear even from the immediate context that this phrase is not a divine recommendation for how to do biblestudy, but quite the contrary represents a total breakdown in communication between God and man.

Steve Billiter

Thomas,

I understand the context I've read it before. However, a truth is a truth still, in principle and other applications besides the obvious context.In fact, I am correct still in what I say, and your analysis is quite narrow. Please consider:

9. Whom shall he teach? The priests and prophets whose business it was to teach the people were themselves misled, and therefore in no position to carry out their responsibilities (see on Matt. 23:16). They were so befogged that God could not teach them. It was necessary, therefore, that they be put aside and new leaders chosen — men who were both meek and willing, alert and spiritual-minded. The old leaders whose minds were spiritually befogged
must be replaced by men to whom God could speak His messages of truth and wisdom. These might be regarded as babes by the learned priests, but they were humble and teachable and able to learn the ways of God.

10. Precept upon precept. Truth must be presented clearly and logically, one point leading naturally on to another. Only thus can men become thoroughly acquainted with truth. Instruction must be given as if to children, by repeating the same point again and again, and going on from one point to another by easy and gentle degrees as men whose minds have been darkened by sin are able to follow. Such instruction may appear simple, but it is effective.


Those who are in responsible positions are not to become converted to the self-indulgent, extravagant principles of the world, for they cannot afford it; and if they could, Christlike principles would not allow it. Manifold teaching needs to be given. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Thus the word of the Lord is patiently to be brought before the children and kept before them, by parents who believe the word of God. "For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." Why?--because they did not heed the word of the Lord that came unto them. {TM 418.2}

This means those who have not received instruction, but have cherished their own wisdom, and have chosen to work themselves according to their own ideas. The Lord gives these the test, that they shall either take their position to follow His counsel, or refuse and do according to their own ideas, and then the Lord will leave them to the sure result. In all our ways, in all our service to God, He speaks to us, "Give Me thine heart." It is the submissive, teachable spirit that God wants. That which gives to prayer its excellence is the fact that it is breathed from a loving, obedient heart. {TM 419.1}

Thomas "Vastergotland" 1 week ago Reply

Steve

Am I correct in surmising from what you write and quote that these verses from Isaiah 28 represents such a scripture where a metaphorical understanding is to be preferred over a literal one?

Ella M. 1 week ago Reply

I like John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

The Jews searched the scriptures and the leaders studied them extensively but did not see Christ in them. I would say Christ was an over-riding truth in the OT, yet I suspect the Jewish leaders dissected the scripture and missed the bit picture.

As I read your above EGW quotes, they seem to indicate that studying the Bible precept upon
precept is taking it as a whole. But it must also be done in humility and not with pride as did the Jewish leaders who did not have "a teachable spirit." Who is to say just who has "cherished their own wisdom" here?

BTW there are different mindsets--one dwells on specifics and details; the other tends to see the whole picture. But both can be right, and no one should say the other is wrong. It does depend on motive and dependence on the Holy Spirit that speaks to us where we are.

Elaine Nelson

"Some of my favourite authors are people I disagree with because they push me to face the inconsistencies in my own understanding of the Bible."

How few dare to read with what they might find disagreeable? But how is one to learn if his conceptions are not challenged? Good lawyers must be able to prosecute or defend both sides of any argument. Only then can they be assured that they are fully informed.

As I have already passed 80, I have discovered many new and challenging facts about the Bible: its writers; it's many changes; its inconsistencies; and it's many contradictory statements. Also, realizing that there are NO original manuscripts and that all have been orally passed down and copied and recopied many times should give us caution at presuming any text is exactly as it was heard!

Some of the most challenging books I have read are by Orthodox Jews on the Hebrew Bible; Karen Armstrong on all world religions and especially the discordant history of evolving Christianity through the tumultuous years following its birth; the Bible as literature; and how the text has been corrupted through the years by scribes and even additions of entire stories to the earlier manuscripts. How, and why were the final choices made for inclusion in the NT when there were as many or more "Gospels" and Letters being used throughout the Christian world? Were the compilers inspired? Or was inspiration only with the writers?

One may not find answers to all questions, but not to ask them is to remain where one has always been. The purpose of education is to have your presuppositions challenged.

Steve Billiter

Elaine,
You are quite mistaken. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies in the Bible, unless you compare the KJV and the NIV, which is Satan's attack on His word. God has given sufficient evidence in His Holy Word that not one person needs to be lost unless that person so chooses to do so. If you think or suppose there is such a thing, then why don't you post your questons so they can be answered?

Ella M.

For me this is found in the belief of a Holy Spirit that leads our understanding. I do not think one can read the bible for spiritual understanding without the Spirit or we will only find the inconsistencies and focus on doubts and cynicism. The Bible is for our character and spiritual journey more than the legalistic (what we call human reason??) belief that it should be perfect thus
resulting in a doubting cynicism or a literal interpretation that makes no sense. It is inspired poetry, stories, experiences, and symbolic prophecy. It has the joy of mystery, hope, comfort, peace, and the pointing to Christ.

It was the Holy Spirit who guided the minds of our ancestors who chose what would be in the Holy Book and the scribes so that they would not miss the overview of God's love. This is my belief and I feel a logical one for one who believes in the God family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as found in the Bible and experienced in the life of the believer (and even in other religions to those of an honest and open heart of love).

This doesn't mean I don't read other books, but we need to read them with prayer for the Holy Spirit for understanding where the writers are coming from. Sometimes one can even find that flash of intellect in these other writings that may add to one's Christian experience; but to do so means leaning on God for understanding and not one's own reason.

I found that if I applied what I learned in Psychology at Whittier college years ago to my Christian belief system, it fit so well, and I became closer to Christ through learning more of His wonderful works.;

Steve Billiter
1 week ago

Ella,
I have had, and still have to take psychology in college, and I find almost all of it wars against Christ and the Bible. Please give an example of which you speak of, and perhaps I can better understand what you mean. My take is that psychology is man's attempt apart from Bible truth to understand and prevent deviant behaviour, as well as to understand the basic workings of the human mind. Some of this "understanding" is through faulty studies and research that becomes false science. Only the Creator understands the human mind that He made.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

1Ti 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Ella M.
1 day ago

Maybe we find what we look for.

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago

How is it that two people can earnestly seek the Spirit while reading the Bible and come up with entirely different concepts? How is one to "know" that his conclusions are what the Spirit intended when they may be different than others, even the majority?

How is one to understand the Bible apart from his own reasoning ability? If the mind is not the access to our understanding, what is? Do we doubt the Spirit's leading or others' reasoning ability if it differs from ours? Shouldn't God alone be the judge?
Preston Foster

Elaine,

My view is that most of us are not acquainted enough with the Spirit to have confidence in His leading. Adventists, of different leanings (progressive, traditional, etc.), for different reasons, depend on other sources of authority (intellect, EGW) to interpret the Bible for us. We have unwittingly avoided intimacy with The Holy Spirit, rendering our confidence in His leading weak -- increasing our dependence on these other sources, all of which lack the power and authority of the Spirit.

Ron Corson

Actually for Steve Billiter babylon means "gate of the gods"

"Babylon mid-14c., from Gk. version of Akkad. Bab-ilani "the gate of the gods," from bab "gate" + ilani, pl. of ilu "god" (cf. Babel). The O.Pers. form, Babiru-, shows characteristic transformation of -l- to -r- in words assimilated from Semitic.

Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper"

The play on words of what happened in Bable is what you seem to be thinking of:

"Babel 1 (ˈbeḇə l) — n 1. Old Testament a. Also called: Tower of Babel a tower presumptuously intended to reach from earth to heaven, the building of which was frustrated when Jehovah confused the language of the builders (Genesis 11:1--9) b. the city, probably Babylon, in which this tower was supposedly built 2. (often not capital ) a. a confusion of noises or voices b. a scene of noise and confusion [from Hebrew Bāḇhēl , from Akkadian Bā-bīlu , literally: gate of God] " http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Babel

I am not certain as to the point of the article a sentence deconstructed does not real damage to the sentence it can be read as before no assembly required it is nothing like a frog deconstructed. In fact we do this all the time in language, why in language we even use tone and facial expression nearly instantly. I am thinking this is all from some article he was accused of writing which did not uphold traditional Adventist views. As if someone from the church or even published by the church could never do such a thing. Praise God they can still slip such things through. But then I don't look at these things from the perspective of someone under the thumb of the denominations employment power. So my views may differ.

Steve Billiter

Ron,

Babylon comes from "Babel" which in the Hebrew means confusion. This is my meaning. "Gate of the gods" must have applied directly to the city of Babylon itself and is simply an additional definition. Our word "babble" as a baby might attempt to speak, or as someone may say, "what are you babbling about? Is similar.

H894
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Riley</td>
<td>1 week ago</td>
<td>Do you know why Strong's agrees with the KJV? Because he does not set out to tell you how the Hebrew or Greek people understood the words, but how the KJV translated them. If you look at any modern standard lexicon of Biblical Hebrew you will find the match is not so good. I prefer not to use the KJV or Strongs, but more reliable sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron Corson</td>
<td>1 week ago</td>
<td>That is one of the classic mistakes people make, thinking the root word means the same as the word in question. It is rather like in English when we say butterfly thinking that the root word is butter therefore a butterfly is butter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connie Severin</td>
<td>6 days ago</td>
<td>My favorite is the Spanish &quot;embarasada&quot; - which contrary to many novice language students, doesn't mean embarrassed but rather &quot;pregnant.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas &quot;Vastergotland&quot;</td>
<td>1 week ago</td>
<td>But it is hard work actually learning a foreign language..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor Hammond</td>
<td>6 days ago</td>
<td>A proper interpretation and understanding of the Holy Scriptures is at ALL times PRIMARILY dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit and Secondarily the sincere teachable heart that humbly seeks after truth and embraces it by faith. I have asked this before: are there any Biblical Study or Christian Theology teachers/lecturers/professors who start their class off with a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to be their Guide in the study of the Scriptures (on any campus for that matter)? We shouldn't question/doubt the Holy Spirit for the many 'different' Christian denominations around but rather the mess of dodgy theology that has crept in as a direct result of 'major dissection'. That's one reason why God gave us the gift of prophecy in the writings of a truly 'inspired' Christian woman: Mrs. Ellen G. White.</td>
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</table>
Are theologians or scholars of biblical studies not then guilty of 'dismembering' the 'BODY OF CHRIST' which has resulted in so many different churches?

T

Elaine Nelson

6 days ago  Reply

Even at the beginning of the early church there were followers of Cephas, followers of Appolos, followers of Paul. Many of the various churches had their favorite leader and there was a variety of position in the very earliest Christian church: see the separation that began in Jerusalem between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. When has there ever been complete harmony?

Trevor Hammond

6 days ago  Reply

It does get a bit hilarious doesn't it with these words that are often misunderstood? For example, the word "SEVENTH" as in Seventh-day, to some does not really mean seven to some but the FIRST! :)

T

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Full: Center for : Welcome Menu | Calendar | My Profile  
This morning I read the story of Jesus calming the storm, to my boys and husband from the *My Bible Friends* series, as we all snuggled in bed for family worship. We marveled at the picture of the calm, starry night sky the disciples sailed under when Jesus first fell asleep (it’s not very often that we see the stars here in Seattle). Next, we pointed out the size of the waves in comparison to the small boat, and my sons found Jesus sleeping in the stern. Then at the end of the story, we talked about how Jesus still keeps us safe from storms and troubles in our lives today. But when the story finished, a marked quiet came over my oldest son – the sort of quiet which signals he is deep in thought. We waited. Finally, very softly, he whispered to me, “I think the boat sank, Mommy.”

Shocked, I asked, “You mean you don’t think Jesus calmed the storm?”

“No. Well, yes, maybe He did later, I guess. But the boat still sank. It did Mommy. It sank.”

Today wasn’t the first time he has heard this particular story. In fact, we’ve been reading it for years. He literally has dozens of books with differing colorful depictions of this very same event. And in the past, he has always believed wholeheartedly in the miracle of Jesus that night – His sovereign control over the winds and the waves. But today, for the very first time ever that I know of, my son doubted his Bible.

I expected this day to come…eventually. But not this soon. Not today.

Without even thinking, my immediate response was to reassure him. “No sweety, look! It says right here, see? The boat didn’t really sink at all, Jesus calmed the storm and the disciples all made it to the other side! They were safe honey, the boat didn’t sink.” And then I realized what just happened: I was so uncomfortable with his questions and with his little doubt that I wanted to squash it immediately. His doubt troubled me, and I instantly wanted to redirect him to faith. I did not like to see him in a place of skepticism, and I wasn’t willing to risk leaving him there.

The Adventist Church is no stranger to this same reaction. I know we strive to be a safe environment in which questions and doubts can be asked, raised, and answered in faith-building ways. I strive for that very thing in my classroom, honestly, and so does most every colleague I work with. But I also know that we are a group of people who tend to prefer solid, hard and fast answers. We really aren’t in our comfort zones when doubts are afoot. If a doubter does expose himself, often he is judged for having a weak faith. Sometimes, we even go so far as to outright discourage any doubts from being raised. Is this healthy?

I suppose it’s understandable to prefer our safe answers because, well, many of us have built our lives around these answers – around the Sabbath, the health message, the beginning of the investigative judgment marking the last days on earth, and more. And I think it is because we have built so much upon them that we become uncomfortable or uneasy when these answers of ours are challenged. They threaten us, and all that we have built. So instead of allowing the doubts to exist for a time, instead of allowing people the risk of their own journey, our knee jerk reaction is sometimes
to just put them down – squash the doubts!

But if I’ve learned anything at all from the teenagers I’m so blessed to work with, it is that detours of questioning DO serve an important purpose along the journey of our spiritual lives. In fact, I think they are necessary stops. It is within these dark hours of doubt, in these earnest times of wrestling, that we come to personally own our faith. And once we own it, we also begin to learn how to truly live it, and share it.

But we would be fools to forget the dark cave of doubt can sometimes morph into a black hole, which too many do not ever emerge from. For some, the deeper they question and the more they embrace doubt, the shakier their faith becomes until, one sad day, they abandon it altogether. Sure – this is the extreme, but let’s be honest. It’s what we are ultimately afraid of, isn’t it? That if we let our children doubt, they will doubt themselves right straight out of our back doors.

I believe our church is still seeking that fine balance between allowing doubts and building faith. If we never allow our kids (or anyone else) to question, it’s going to result in them ending up with a shallow, unexamined faith. However, if we indulge our doubts too far, we may arrive at the dangerous destination of cherishing them and preferring them over the sometimes more difficult task of choosing faith.

When I discover one of my students loitering in doubts, one wise pastor taught me to ask them a simple question: “Are you trying to get in, or are you trying to get out?” Meaning – are you asking these questions to grow further into a relationship with God (and this church), or are you asking these questions to find a way out of the relationship, and out of your calling and duties as a Christian. It’s this examining of our motives that will help us keep regular tabs on the state of our hearts, and allow doubting to remain useful instead of dangerous.

In this church, when we find ourselves becoming uncomfortable or disturbed by the questions and doubts of other Adventists around us, I think we need to remember that “If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid to doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger. It knows God more certainly and it can enjoy God more deeply.” (Os Guiness, *God in the Dark*, 14) Restated: we should not be afraid when someone seeks to examine, question, or doubt our cherished beliefs – for if they are in fact the truth, they will be able to stand up to questioning and still emerge as truth.

As for me, honestly, I’m not ready yet to simply stand by and allow my little boy to freely doubt the stories of scripture. But I may have no choice in the matter, either. What I can purpose to do – and what our church must endeavor to do also – is to combat doubt with faith and prayer, and to work towards being people who are confident enough in the strength of our truths that we are not afraid for them to be examined. Even by a 4 year old.

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**Vernon P. Wagner**  
1 week ago  
Reply

If, in the quest for intangibles such as truth & enlightenment, the seeker finds a path that no longer requires sectarian membership in a man made church, in what way is he / she morphing into a black hole of doubt? At some point, everything that is now fully accepted as Christian orthodoxy was considered to be blasphemous by those holding opposing views. Spiritual growth can be achieved outside the limits of dogma. Those who dare choose that route will surely be morphing, but not into a black hole.
Elaine Nelson

“Are you trying to get in, or are you trying to get out?”
This is very demeaning approach. Would you ask your son such a question? We should listen to any questions as an honest desire to have rational reasons that do not infer that one is seeking ways to either get in or get out.

Answers will depend on the maturity of the questioner, but all questions should be honestly answered.
Example: what should you tell a teenager when she asks why it is wrong: to wear makeup, read fiction, attend movies, or even why only SDAs observe Saturday as a holy day? If they don't ask, be assured they are asking others are silently wondering. If they read the Bible they may discover texts that have never been answered in either church or their SDA school. Do they know there is not a single Bible text about wearing jewelry, makeup, attending movie or reading fiction (how much of the Bible is fiction?), and that there is no command to observe ANY holy day in the entire NT?

Yes, there is a risk; but if faith is too fragile to receive honest questions, of what worth is it? Does mere silence mean assent to all doctrines? It may mean they questioner realizes that his actions are not worthy of answers, or else there are no "good" answers.

BTW: was your son satisfied with the answer you gave? Be prepared for many more like that in the future. Can you not explain the idea of metaphors or symbols? Aesop's fables have good morals, but no one considers them to be literal. Why not the same application to the Bible. Does faith depend on all the Bible stories being literal?

Ranald McLeish

Oh for the day when, " --- we should not be afraid when someone seeks to examine, question, or doubt our cherished beliefs – for if they are in fact the truth, they will be able to stand up to questioning and still emerge as truth."

As questioning the voted fundamental beliefs of the church is considered an open inverstion for ridicule and persecution, it appears few are prepared to question Church teaching today. For example consider the current teaching that the Papacy has taken away, not only Christ's ministry in Heaven, but has replaced the the Heavenly host with a host of its own. And that the persecuting rule of the Papacy continues for 2,300 years.

As it appears mostAdventists are unaware of these teaching of the church that you and I love, the reader is invited to consider the following teachings.

How long does the little horn reign?

Stefanovic, Wisdom to the wise, p. 310-311. Commenting on Dan. 8:13-14: The question How long? Literally means “Until when?” putting the emphasis --- on the point in time that will demarcate the end of the rebellion. --- The visions main points can be summarized as follows: It speaks of the removal of the continual sanctuary services, the rebellion that causes destruction, and the surrender and trampling of the sanctuary underfoot. As in verse 11, the continual
sanctuary service pertains to the whole service in the sanctuary and should not be limited to the morning and evening sacrifices. The rebellion that causes desolation is best understood as the type of aggressive rebellion that results in the destruction of the services of the sanctuary and of some of the people who serve in it.

Teachers SS Quarterly, 2002, p. 45. After a discussion on how this little horn (the LH of 8:9) would oppose truth, it is revealed that it would be allowed to do so for “two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” (Dan. 8:14).

Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, p. 127. Only after 2300 evenings and mornings will the destructive rampage of the little horn stop.---

Ibid. p. 131, Chapter 8 is even more explicit: the reign of the little horn lasts 2300 evenings and mornings. --- (equalling 2300years).

Gerhard Pfandl, Daniel, p. 61. In Daniel 7 the little–horn power, follows the four beasts, which together account for a reign of at least 1,000 years.

Where does the little horn rule?

2002 SS Lesson, p. 41. But then, the little horn (8:9) does something that no other kingdom has done: It goes against the Prince of the Host in the heavenly sanctuary

Ibid., p. 44, The same picture is used in Daniel 8. The little horn attacks the heavenly host and casts “down some of the host”. (vs 10); it then goes into the sanctuary where he “exalted himself as the Prince of the host” (vs. 11, NKJV). The little horn is attacking heaven and a ministry in heaven. --- Hence the text says that the horn misappropriated the daily ministry of Christ and then “set over,” or appointed, its own host to control or minister it. p. 48.

c. Stefanovic, Wisdom to the wise, p. 311. The rebellion that causes desolation is best understood as the type of aggressive rebellion that results in the destruction of the services of the sanctuary and of some of the people who serve in it.

12BC 394-395. Since the “Prince of hosts” is a heavenly being (cf. Joshua 5:14) the sanctuary in Daniel 8:9-14 must be the heavenly one. --- The main concern of this vision is the attitude of the little horn toward the sanctuary and the priestly work of the Prince (verses11, 12) It attacks the host of heaven, defeats them (verse 10), and goes after the Prince and the sanctuary. --- The tamid is taken away from the Prince, and the foundation /place of the sanctuary is cast down and rejected. Then in a spirit of rebellion/transgression (verse 12), the little horn sets up its own force to control the tamid. --- The little horn somehow affects the Princes tamid, or mediatiorial work in the holy place. The question of the horn’s interference with the mediatiorial work of the Prince in the Most Holy Place is addressed in Daniel 8: 13, 14.

As a result of statements such as the above, I have asked the following question at all levels of the church: Is the teaching that a Papal host has replaced the Heavenly host, the Church’s official position regarding the little horn today? I have had little response, and it appears the church is not open to frank discussion regarding this fundamental belief.

Elaine Nelson

Will the real Adventist doctrinal authority stand up and be counted for all the answers above? Is
there any wonder there is so much confusion on one of the most "unique" doctrines only promoted by Adventism?

Ervin Taylor

Is it a blessing of the Adventist Today web site that very few of those posting have any interest in the strange interpretations that are created by some Adventists based on a few verses in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Usually these interpretations are taken totally out of the historical context which created the original texts.

Although I have many reservations about parts of the theology of Martin Luther, I am 100% with him when he questioned the helpfulness of the materials in Daniel and Revelation. May I venture to suggest that removing them from the canon of Scripture would be of positive benefit to the life of the Christian Church in the modern era. Just think how Adventism would be changed for the better if they were no longer afforded the standing that they currently enjoy in traditional Adventism.

Vernon P. Wagner

Brother Ervin has stated an excellent point. History is replete with examples of clergymen who used those books to predict the end of time / second advent, and ALL of them have been WRONG!

Kevin Riley

Let us not forget what Daniel and Revelation point out very clearly: In the end, God wins. If people misuse them, if they come to all sorts of strange conclusions, should we not do something about the people rather than the books? I have never been fascinated by the details of Daniel and Revelation as many SDAs have. But every time I have reead them, I have been struck by their central message that God is in control, and no matter how bad things get, He is with us and He will set things straight.

I disagree with traditional Adventism on a number of points, but I am quite happy to stand with traditional Adventists in voting against removing any book from the Bible. We need the books of Daniel and Revelation for many reasons, not all of which may be apparent to any of us today. If nothing else they keep us from assuming that once we become Christians everything is sunshine and light. We are in a war zone, and casualties are to be expected. It would be nice if so many weren't from 'friendly' fire, but it is still good to be reminded that all will not go well in this world because it is a contested space. Knowing that, in the end, God wins, can make the journey easier.

William Sandborn

The book of Revelation is all about Christ. Why would anyone want to get rid of it.

William Sandborn
Elaine Nelson

We needn't eliminate Daniel and Revelation, but neither do we eliminate Ecclesiastes, Numbers, and the Song of Solomon, but they are seldom used for doctrines. D&R represent the birth of Adventism, and thus will always have a unique position, however faulty, in Adventism's history.

Would Adventism not have any salvific value without those two books? How do they contribute to anyone's salvation or eternal hope? Are we given insufficient assurance of God's being in control by the other 64 books? These apocryphal books present a conundrum that Adventist's have claimed to have "unlocked the key" to their mysterious symbols and only they have the vision to interpret them.

Ranald McLeish

Are we considering the consequences of where these new teachings are leading?
For example, does the Papacy arise after the four beasts?
Do the four beasts rule for approximately 1,000 years?
Does the Papal little horn rule for 2,300 years?
Has a Papal host replaced the Heavenly host?
Is the end of the 2,300 years 2838 A.D.?
If these teachings are correct, what happens to Fundamental Belief No 24, and the historical teachings of Adventism in particular?

In the light of the above should we reconsider counsels such as the following, When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers have an entirely different religious experience. --- FILB 345. There will be a new perception of truth, and it, will have a clearness and a power that all will discern. COL 130.

Ervin Taylor

I’d like to suggest answers to Mr. McLeish questions:

1. Does the Papacy arise after the four beasts? Answer: No. Comment: No Biblical author including whoever wrote the books of Daniel and Revelation had no idea that an institution called “the Papacy” would exist. The existence of the Christian Church with all of its major divisions and denominations lasting over 2000 years was never even envisioned.

2. Do the four beasts rule for approximately 1,000 years? Answer: No. Comment: First explain what the “four beasts” have to do with anything.

3. Does the Papal little horn rule for 2,300 years? Answer: No. Comment: Same as Comment 1.


5. Is the end of the 2,300 years 2838 A.D.? Answer: No. Comment: I thought that one of the few things that corporate Adventism has learned is not to “set dates.” Remember what happened the first time we did that!
6. What happens to Fundamental Belief No 24, and the historical teachings of Adventism in particular? Answer: If I may use a delightful term of a recently deceased GC president, Fundamental Belief No. 24 should go into the “dust bin” of Adventist history where it belongs.

Might I suggest that this the most helpful understanding of the comment of Ellen White “When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers have an entirely different religious experience.” Ignoring them would be a good start.

William Sandborn

Just because a denomination has misused some books doesn't mean we get rid of them. Hebrews has been misused also but read as written it gives valuable insights into Christ's ascension to the right hand of God and much other information also. The problem is that we sometimes try to make the Bible fit our doctrines instead instead of making our doctrines fit the Bible. The same is true of Revelation.

William Sandborn

Ranald McLeish

Hi Ervin,

Am I to take it that along with the books of Daniel and Revelation, you would include the book of Acts on the basis of 17:11, the book of Isaiah on the basis of chapter 28, and especially verses 10-13; and the books of Timothy on the basis of 2 Tim. 2:15 and 3:16, to name a few?

Is it not just possible that when God's people take heed of counsells such as the SOP quoted above, the riches of Heaven associated with the Latter Rain will be poured out in abundance.

*Those who are true to their calling as messengers of God, will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." [John 1:29.] {GW 56.3}

The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the Divine. In words that were almost a counterpart of the words of Christ Himself, he bore witness to the Saviour's glory. "He that cometh from above" he said, "is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all." "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." [John 3:31, 34.] {GW 56.4}

In this glory of Christ all His followers are to share. The Saviour could say, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." [John 5:30.] And John declared, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We can discern the character of God,
and accept Christ by faith, only as we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. And to all who do this, the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him." [Colossians 2:9, 10.]

Ervin Taylor

We can certainly honor Ellen White and her views as providing a point of departure for the Adventist tradition. In the spirit of the "present truth" concept she presented in the 19th century, it is appropriate that 21st century Adventism move beyond her and advance a 21st century "present truth" Adventist vision. Not quoting Ellen White as authoritative is one of the ways that we can move beyond her.

Ron Corson

Ervin take some time to examine what Adventists mean by the term present truth. It is a code for Adventist doctrines. You can't recover the term in Adventism simply by redefining the term. See the article:

William Sandborn

Revelation 22:19 says " And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book." If those that want to do away with Revelation are wrong, their loses are are very large and eternal.

Ron Corson

Melissa, I like your child. You wrote:
--
"Then at the end of the story, we talked about how Jesus still keeps us safe from storms and troubles in our lives today. But when the story finished, a marked quiet came over my oldest son – the sort of quiet which signals he is deep in thought. We waited. Finally, very softly, he whispered to me, “I think the boat sank, Mommy.”

Shocked, I asked, “You mean you don’t think Jesus calmed the storm?”

“No. Well, yes, maybe He did later, I guess. But the boat still sank. It did Mommy. It sank.”
--
You know what you told your child is not true, Jesus does not keep us safe from the storms and troubles of life. Your 4 year old knows that and thus questioned the whole thing, the boat sank...it is not still around they got old and they were torn apart or sank. Whatever he may have been thinking
he seems to have realized the error of the lesson you applied. Trouble comes and we live through it. Bad things happen to people even if they follow Jesus. You know doubt mean your statement in a much more narrow way, that is God will ultimately save us and bring us to Him in the end.

What is interesting is that a lot of the questions that get asked are because of impossible statements that Christians have made which everyone pretty much knows can't be as stated. The church in its quest to protect particular doctrines has been terrible in this regard. Some of the above conversation is quite useful in pointing those kind of errors in overstatements out.

Elaine Nelson

When bright children ask questions, they should be answered honestly; to do less is to be disingenuous and children realize it. Those who don't question will have doubts in their mind and understand: either questions are not to be asked, or that answers are not proper.

This is the story of Adventism: those who dared to ask questions have been shown the door, beginning with Canright and many more. When questions aren't honestly answered, those people will simply dismiss the church.

Ervin Taylor

If I might respond to Ron. Redefining the meaning of words is at the very center of the history of Christian theology. New Testament writers took terms from the Old Testament and reinterpreted and redefined them. Thus, I submit that we can take a term used by traditional Adventists and redefine it in any way that a contemporary context requires. Remember, traditionalists do not control how the rest of us can employ words and their meanings. If we allow them to control the discussion, that is our problem.

Ron Corson

Actually redefining words is central to cults. That is why Walter Martin in his information about dealing with cults said the first thing is to get past the language barrier. That is they redefine words to mean something different from what the rest of Christians mean. I can't think of any terms the New Testament redefined, you would need to give me an example. They reinterpreted them in the light of the risen Christ and His instructions. Something of a bit more import then we today can say for why we should redefine a term. After all the English language has over a million words we could certainly come up with a new term for our definitions if we wanted. Why continue the confusion or add to it. Even then if you are trying to redefine a term you had better go to some trouble to explain the redefined meaning as a simply courtesy to any reader.

The use of ill defined terms is symptomatic to those spreading propaganda as opposed to those seeking to find or disseminate truth or knowledge.

Stephen Foster

For an Adventist Erv, you are clearly so “out there” (as the kids say) in your belief that The Book of (the Prophet) Daniel and The Revelation of Jesus Christ should be removed from the canon for
all practical purposes (please correct me if I have in fact mischaracterized your position) that there
is almost nowhere to go with you on this topic.

The Biblical prophecies are among the more “probative” things about the whole “God” concept. IF
God has, through human agencies, predicted—in detail—world events which eventually came to
pass, and has predicted that which is currently happening and/or will happen; it is certainly
suggestive or evidence supernatural intelligence.

If there is no benefit to Bible prophecy, that is, if God did not inspire what is written in those books
concerning “things which must shortly take place,” then there is no foundation, or basis, for belief
in God at all; especially if the Genesis creation narrative is mythology. If this is your point, say so.

Elaine, you seem to believe that other Christians can and do somehow continue as Christians
without these books. If this is true, which of course it is not, for what purpose and to what end? As
Kevin has pointed out, if there is no Biblical assurance that God “wins” in the end, what is the
point?

The doctrines of heaven and hell are in part derived and certainly reinforced by The Revelation of
Jesus Christ. Are there Christians who don’t believe in either? Oops.

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Ervin Taylor

It is certainly correct to suggest that I am in a minority of contemporary Adventists concerning the
suggestion that these two books should be viewed in the same way that Martin Luther regarded the

However, I hope we all will recall that what writings are regarded as "in the canon" is a product of
a process of decision making by humans over centuries. I see no problem is saying that, in some
cases, certain books were very helpful to the Jews (in the case of Daniel) and to early Christians (in
the case of Revelation) when they were written, but, 2000 years has come and gone, conditions
change, and with it, the source of what we think of as "inspired" literature also changes.

Is it not correct that different religious communities decide which books are considered to be in and
out of the "canon" and which are to be regarded as "inspired." The traditional members of each of
different these communities think that "their" books are to be regarded as the most "truth filled." I
am sure that members of the Adventist faith community along with the vast majority of Christians
do not regard the Book of Mormon to be "truth filled." I certainly share that view.

In the same way, no matter what strange statements are contained in the writings of Ellen White,
traditional members of the Adventist community seem to view these works as "truth filled." The
vast majority of Christians obviously do not.

Just as I would suggest that certain books of the Bible (my list includes Daniel and Revelation)
need to be consigned to the same place that James was consigned by Luther, certain things that
Ellen White wrote also could benefit being added to an updated version of the Books of the New
Testament apocrypha. Just a suggestion.

---

Ranald McLeish

Ervin said: *Redefining the meaning of words is at the very center of the history of Christian theology.*

Wouldn't it be more accurate to say redefining the meaning of the words of Inspiration, 2 Tim 3:16-17, (not verbal dictation) is the first step men and churches takes in thinking to change the word of God, to suit their own doctrines. Eg. The change of the Sabbath etc. by the Catholic Church.

Don't the new teachings of Daniel amount to the same thing? Why is it that it appears no one feels comfortable, or confident, to question these particular teachings?

Ervin Taylor

1 week ago  Reply

I'm afraid Mr. McLeish has done it again in suggesting that it was the Catholic Church who "changed the Sabbath." He needs to read a good church history book by a modern reputable scholar. I hope our knowledgable Roman Catholic friends will excuse people such as Mr. McLeish who insists on repreating in the 21st century, the anti-Catholic propaganda current in 19th century America. Regretfully, some of these anti-Catholic sentiments made it into Ellen White's Great Controvery volume, although when you compare some of the language her assistants put into some of the chapters, they are not as vitriolic as other statements that were circulating in 19th Century America. This does not mean to deny that some Catholic authorities in the Middle Ages including a number of Popes, engaged in some behavior which all Christians including contempoary Catholic scholars and others, condemn and deplore. But to continue to make false statements about modern Roman Catholic intentions that ignore the many changes that have gone on in that faith community over the last hundred years should also be deplored and challenged.

David

1 week ago  Reply

Ervin is so predictable, when he wanted to refute a point, he points out to look for "modern reputable scholars" he never gives the sources. Please define and provide the sources if you wanted to have credibility.

Elaine Nelson

6 days ago  Reply

"The change of the Sabbath etc. by the Catholic Church."

This theme by Adventism has no basis in fact, other than it was taught by early Adventism and confirmed by their imprimatur, Ellen White.

A bit of history: Many of the earliest church fathers have written that the Christians began celebrating the day of Resurrection beginning in 100 A.D. Barnabas, Justin, the Gospel of Peter, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Ignatius, Athanisus and Augustine, to name a few.

In addition, SDA theologians, Mervyn Maxwell, P. Gerhardt Damsteegt, and Kenneth Strand have documented that the vast majority of early Christians began observing the first day of the week in honor of the Resurrection.
As this became the day for early Christians to meet and observe this event, by the time Constantine became ruler of the Roman Empire, he gave the first ruling of religious liberty in 315 A.D. that all religions were now free to practice their beliefs: pagan, Christian and Jews. A few years later, he gave another order that all the empire should rest from work on the first day of the week. He never ordered it to be a holy day, but like the Jewish Decalogue, that it should be a day of rest from work.

In 325, because of such dissension in the Christian world, particularly of the nature of Christ, Constantine called for a church council to settle the arguments on the nature of Christ. At no time did the church move to change the Sabbath. There was no need as by then almost the entire Christian world had been celebrating the first day for more than a thousand years. Catholic claims are merely that: claims, without any evidence, yet still promoted by the SDA church. Few have read and studied the history, so the blithely repeat what they have been taught.

Ron Corson

Isn't it funny that the SDA's are trying to support the false claims of the Roman Catholic church, in effect giving it a start so much closer to the fictional start of the Roman Catholic's with Peter as the first Pope. But then when you go with tradition, Peter can be the first Pope and the Roman Catholics can change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. What else does one really need, I think I will get out my soundtrack of the musical fiddler on the roof. Let's all sing "tradition"

Stephen Foster

Erv,

What precisely is, or what qualifies as, an/the “ant-Catholic” statement or sentiment? Surely you are not suggesting that the mere claim that the RCC has transferred the day of weekly observance and worship from the Sabbath to another day is “anti-Catholic.”

It may help to consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church for some context:

“Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the sabbath, but the Lord's Day, in which our life is blessed by him and by his death.108

2176 The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship "as a sign of his universal beneficence to all."109 Sunday worship fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people.”

This sounds like change.
Trevor Hammond

Hey, Mrs. Howell

Ma'am, it's so good to know that you have Family Worship. Kids are such fun to have around at this time. I note that your 4 year old doesn't ask a question but rather makes a statement that 'the boat sank'. This in itself is NOT doubt Ma'am. He just draws a conclusion based on his understanding of what he thinks happened. 'Bless his dear heart' though, for his sincerity in what he understood happened. Sincerity in insisting something happened is NOT doubt: it only reflects the persons misunderstanding of something which they perceive to be true or their perception of what they understand is a possible outcome.

Perhaps the mention of the BIG w-a-v-e-s in contrast to the tiny boat seemed to have given him the very realistic view of a no way of escape situation, considering that even the disciples themselves thought the same was going to happen to them. Perhaps too, your son and the many others like him that we may come into contact with are not really doubters but seekers. Maybe they simply seek a reassurance of the 'it is well with my soul' experience which reaffirms their understanding of what it means to have the MASTER with us on the boat.

It would have been doubt had the disciples not called to Jesus for help in their desperation; but they did, and even though they didn't know that Jesus would calm the storm miraculously they believed He could help them. There's a beautiful song I heard which has this line in it: "Sometimes He calms the Storm and sometimes He calms his Child..." Though difficulty and calamity may come, when He is with us, it is unDOUBTedly a win win situation where doubt should always sink: not the tiny boat.

T

Preston Foster

Erv,

I'm curious as to how these Catholic scholars got the impression that their church had, indeed, changed Sabbath observance to Sunday:


"Question: Which is the Sabbath day?"

"Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day."

"Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?"

"Answer. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."


"Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that worship should be changed from Saturday to Sunday .... Now the Church ... instituted, by God's authority, Sunday as the day of worship. This same Church, by
the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory long before the Bible was made. We have, therefore, the same authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday."


"Regarding the change from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, I wish to draw your attention to the facts:

"1) That Protestants, who accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and religion, should by all means go back to the observance of the Sabbath. The fact that they do not, but on the contrary observe the Sunday, stultifies them in the eyes of every thinking man.

"2) We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living Church, the authority of the Church, as a rule to guide us. We say, this Church, instituted by Christ to teach and guide man through life, has the right to change the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and hence, we accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday. We frankly say, yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance, the Friday abstinence, the unmarried priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulation of Catholic marriages and a thousand other laws.

"It is always somewhat laughable, to see the Protestant churches, in pulpit and legislation, demand the observance of Sunday, of which there is nothing in their Bible."

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago  
It is always disconcerting to find so many believe the "anti-Christ's claims" regarding the changes they made, rather than studying history to determine what really happened. Long before there was a Roman Catholic church, there was only one Christian church and that church never claimed to have changed sabbath to sunday, but they were the first to celebrate the only and only reason to be Christians: the Resurrection. Is it so strange that the entire reason for Christianity was the Resurrection? There will always be the Sabbath celebrated by Judaism, but for those who didn't or don't recognize Christ, they ignore the Resurrection.

Ask any Christian: "Why are you a Christian?" Will they ever say "The Fourth Commandment convinced me to be a Christian," or "I wouldn't be a Christian had I not realized the Sabbath is the day we should celebrate."

To ignore celebrating the Resurrection for many years, which the SDA church did, is a reunciation of the raison de' etre for Christianity. Strange?

Ervin Taylor 6 days ago  

He also might want to read the work of an Adventist scholar who taught at the SDA Seminary at Andrews, the late Samuel Bacchiocchi. His study clearly brings together the historical evidence that while some Christian groups continued to observe the Sabbath, a growing number of Christian
congregations were worshiping on Sunday by the end of the second century AD. Obviously, there was no Catholic Church in existence at that time. The reasons for the slow change from Sabbath to Sunday worship in the Christian communities are complex. However, the one thing you can definitely conclude is that the Roman Catholic Church had nothing to do with the change. I’m afraid that Ellen White’s sources got that very wrong. She accepted those sources and included their views in her Great Controversy volume.

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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
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| Those who claim the Catholic church changed Sabbath to Sunday are clearly confining their Christian history to Ellen's writings where she was terribly wrong. Anyone who accepts only one fairly recent writer such as Ellen, who had an extreme anti-Catholic bias which was common to her era, are illustrating their extreme deficiencies in early Christian history.

It's rather strange for those who reject all Catholic teachings, to accept their statements on sabbath! |

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| It does not follow that if you observe the creation Sabbath of the Lord, that you therefore/necessarily ignore the resurrection of the same Lord. That doesn’t compute. The pagan rituals generally associated with the annual celebration of the resurrection have as much to do with the actual resurrection as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer has to do with the actual birth of Christ.

As to the transference of the weekly day of observance and worship, this has little to do with EGW; while few Christians would claim the Sabbath as the only reason they are Christians, there must be some reason for the unmistakable instruction to “no longer [keep] the sabbath…” Furthermore, how does this square with Matthew 5:19; not to mention the Daniel 7:25 prophecy? |

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<td>We in Adventist Today appreciate your time and interest in making comments on articles produced by our dedicated writers. However, you do an injustice to authors when comments have little-to-nothing to do with the topic presented, as in the bulk of those with this blog. Please stay on topic and give consideration to the author and blog content by addressing concerns or comments on the subject presented. Deletion is an option, but our preference is to request you address off-topic items as a sidebar and not the main theme of your comment. Please consider this a strong request to stay on the topic, as presented by the author. CH</td>
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David  6 days ago  Reply

Erv. I'm familiar with Bacchiocchi's book. They were several factor that influenced the change from Sabbath to Sunday in early christianity, nevertheless it is a fact CC was very much involved making official. Preston's quotations from Catholic Scholar are correct. Elaine not offense... but I prefer the insights of Ellen White that from Elaine Nelson.

Elaine Nelson  6 days ago  Reply

Editor,

The topic was questioning, and apparently there are more answers than questions, which is often the case with religions: answering questions, that no one may be asking.

The assumptions of many Adventists have little factual basis and often the more strongly held the less need to inquire as to the reasons for beliefs. This is well illustrated here by those who have received most of the Christian history from Great Controversy. Had there not been a resurrection, there would be no Christians today, and certainly no Adventist Christians.

The Jewish Sabbath was the principal hallmark of Judaism and as the Church became predominantly Gentile in membership, the first day of the week, Sunday, became holy to Christians. Sunday, no longer Saturday, as the proper time when Christians assembled to worship. Named "The Lord's Day" (see Revelation), Sunday became a symbol by which Christians differentiated themselves from Jews. The Jews met their denouement when the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and afterward, the Christian church became a Gentile church, no long associated with Judaism.

Why have Adventists adopted so much of Judaism and less of Christianity as defined by the NT?

Vernon P. Wagner  6 days ago  Reply

As I recall, EGW was Methodist prior to the Millerite hoax of 1844. When a 7th Day Baptist joined the 'Little Flock,' they picked, and chose which Talmudic Laws to be adopted. Jewish rabbis of today find this totally unacceptable. "Either observe all the Mosaic Law, or none of it," they say.

A book by Michael Schemer, 'The Believing Brain....How We Construst Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truth' states the following: "We believe before we reason. Once beliefs are formed, we seek out confirmatory arguments and evidence to justify them. We ignore contrary evidence or make up rationalizations to explain it away. We do not like to admit we are wrong. We seldom change our minds."

Ranald McLeish  6 days ago  Reply

Vernon, unfortunately, the quote is all too true, unless people become aware.

To day the various churches seek to manipulate the Scriptures to suit their individual doctrines, while the members choose to adopt the teaching of their favourite pastor, evangelist, or theologian.
This approach is commonly referred to as diversity, variety, or pluralism, none of which is pre-eminent, none of which controls or rules the other. Thus today, in this regard, neither the Scriptures, or the Church, speak with one voice today. In the resulting confusion, the issue is not whether a doctrine is true, but is it an honest belief? Thus people are deceived into believing, sincerity, and honestly held belief's, (!!) override the word of God.

In the churches today (the SdA church included) not only are people creating their own truth's, it is accepted that they have the right to do so. Thus today, doctrinal authority is being transferred from God through His Holy Word, to individuals. What greater deception could there be?

Very soon according to Daniel and Revelation the right to worship according to one's personal belief will be taken away again. During this time the wheat will be separated from the tares. Will we treasure the probationary time we have been given to prepare for this great test and trial of our faith?

---

**Preston Foster** 6 days ago  

Vernon,

Thanks, very much. Your post says more, in fewer, words than most.

---

**Trevor Hammond** 6 days ago  

It comes as no surprise that those who wear the so-called progressive badge use intellectualism as a crutch to pass off their dodgy unbelief as legitimate credible voices of reason which has unfortunately duped many into thinking that they are some sort of ‘illuminati’ (for want of a better word) who will lead the way forward in their efforts to 1] stamp out the Sabbath 2] promote homosexual perversion 3] get rid of Daniel and Revelation 4] disregard Bible Creation, 5] promote anarchy within the organized church 6] denigrate the writings of inspired gift of prophecy writer, Ellen G. White 7] cast doubt on the word of God 8] and justify the error of their ways.

As these neo-fundamentalist extremists (or illuminati) strengthen their forces of insurgents against Adventism on the pretense of saving the day, they destroy and slowly erode the faith of many and encourage the unconverted into thinking all is well with their souls. This is a far greater danger and threat that even Traditional Conservative Adventism ‘at its worst’ has never treaded on.

This unDOUBTedly has encouraged many others to join the 'doubters anonymous' faction and more especially those that are gullible and looking for any excuse to disobey God and make their sinful ways seem a legitimate sought after virtue of heaven. Satan tried this questioning philosophy in heaven and just take a look around at the disastrous results of what 'intellectualised' apostasy can do: Doubt is just a terrible symptom of rebellion. I suppose that perhaps when these misguided off-shoot individuals 'mature' in their understanding of the error of their ways they will hopefully 'turn' from the darkness of error and embrace the God of the Cross.

T
I’ll add to Trevor’s comments. You that once believed in the present truth, that now systematically opposes what the Bible clearly teaches… repent, repent, repent, before is too late. “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

OK, in the interests of staying on the general topic of questioning authority: suppose for sake of argument we stipulate that there had been among some early Christians a tradition of gathering on Sunday. Clearly the RCC has institutionalized Sunday sacredness AND teaches that the Sabbath should “no longer” be kept—without any Biblical authority for either position—no matter what the history of tradition had been prior to its establishment. Does Elaine, or Erv, or Vernon, or Ron, or anyone actually QUESTION this?

Intellectual curiosity, it would seem, would extend to QUESTION how the institutionalization of the changing of practice and of nomenclature (from the “Sabbath of the Lord” claimed by the Lord even of the Sabbath” to “the Lord’s day;” for which there is no Biblical authority nor scriptural evidence that the Revelation 1:10 reference was any other day than the Sabbath) juxtaposes with Matthew 5:19; or Daniel 7:25 for that matter.

I would agree that the RCC institutionalized Sunday as the day of worship, it appears simply by going with the predominate practices. But any church organization seems to start institutionalizing things. After the bishops of the city moved to individual churches and then to the Pastors that we see in most all churches now.

If you problem is the institutionalization of practices I am in full agreement with you. It is the real danger and it is what happens when the church or people in authority start to worry when someone questions their institutionalized tradition. The Adventist church is no exception and when we declared our first set of 27 fundamental beliefs we probably moved one more giant step in the institutionalization process.

One of the big institutionalization behaviors is that you must believe in the Biblical interpretation of the mother church. This greatly destroys the ability to question and the chance of growth for both the person and the church. Questions lead to changes, and aside from the incorrect quote above people do change their minds and they change them more often then many people think. In fact if anyone changed their mind it proves the quote wrong since it said "'We believe before we reason.' If that was true then even a seldom change of mind would not happen.

Adventists have similarly "instituted" Sabbath keeping as their most important doctrine. It is the one identifying difference from all other Christian bodies.
Why not answer questions in the same manner in which you would listen to a prospective convert who truly wanted to know the reasons why certain doctrines are important? What are the sources? When did this practice begin?

I thoroughly agree that there is no scriptural evidence for observing Sunday, nor have I ever stated that. Likewise, there is nothing in the New Testament where the Gentile Christians were instructed to BEGIN observing the seventh day, a day that they had never previously observed. Failure to supply such a text sorta removes the sandy foundation on which the seventh day was ever commanded of CHRISTIANS.

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Trevor Hammond

Is there a time to question the Sabbath when even the New Testament writers and Jesus Himself makes no reference to such change? The same promise God made to Abraham continues in the Christian Church and obviously the handwriting of ordinances (ceremonial laws) were nailed to the cross by way of Christ fulfilling its significant requirements. Christians therefore are heirs according to the Promise. *[Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.] *[Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless."]* Obedience to God is a required even in the 'new' covenant which remarkably He makes provision for in Christ as seen in *[Gal 2:20].*

One of the terrible ailments of Laodicea is that they are spiritually blind and therefore unable to discern between truth and error; darkness and light; right and wrong; righteousness and unrighteousness. If the ever was a time when people think they are spiritually rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing - this is such a time: not to QUESTION but to humbly submit to Jesus Christ and receive the remedy He freely offers for our maladies.

**Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy, is a part of God's immutable law, which is a perpetual sign for those who have chosen to follow His precepts and receive the Promise. Obedience to God is required for those who walk in newness of life and this is only made possible by faith in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Just imagine He even provides the means for obedience...and declares us righteous by the same means in Christ.**


---

Elaine Nelson

There is absolutely no record in the Bible of the Fourth Commandment being given to anyone other than the Israelites. It explicitly states in the preamble:

"I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt"
And afterward, God said to Moses, "Tell the SONS OF ISRAEL.." Never were they given to anyone else.

"Yahweh our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. IT WAS NOT WITH OUR FATHERS THAT God made this covenant, but with us, with us who are here, all living today."

Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever changed a day of worship. It gradually became a custom to celebrate, not as a holy day, the day of Resurrection. Eventually, by the fourth century, all Christendom was meeting on this day. History has no record of Christian Jews after the first century, so it became recognized as a special day by simple practice. Just as many customs and traditions begin without ever making an official record of a formal change.

How does one explain the several places where Paul says we are not to judge in "regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day"? Paul was not writing to Jewish Christians but Gentile Christians and in the Jerusalem Controversy it "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things you will do well."

The ASSUMPTION that Gentile Christians began observing the seventh day as the sabbath has no Bible support whatsoever. Where is the command given to Christians? The Jews still observe the seventh day as their heritage to whom it was given. Can anyone imagine Christianity without the Resurrection? It was only natural for Christians to begin celebrating their whole reason for existence. Please answer this simple question: Would there be a single Christian today if there had been no Resurrection? To return to Judaism while claiming Christianity is a strange mixture; yet Jewish food laws and rules still encumber Adventism.

Trevor Hammond  6 days ago  Reply

Heb 8:8 For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, Heb 8:9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.
Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
It is clear that the New Testament Church is referenced as (spiritual) Israel and the Ten Commandments are written on their hearts - Sabbath et al. Those that are still steeped in the religion of Egypt and Babylon won't appreciate the 'brought thee out of Egypt' part.

Elaine Nelson  5 days ago  Reply

How can there be a "new covenant" if it is identical to the old covenant? "If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second." "Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant." "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also." What was the change of law?
"we are "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death IN LETTERS ENGRAVED ON STONES came with glory...how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

If the old covenant was letters engraved on stones, is the new covenant the same? Is the same covenant written on stone the identical one now on the heart? Why?

David
5 days ago
Reply

Elaine says "There is absolutely no record in the Bible of the Fourth Commandment being given to anyone other than the Israelites". looks like you really...but really need to read your Bible. here this proof that the Sabbath is and was more than just for one nation or one period of time. Jesus himself stated "The Sabbath was made for man"

Steve Billiter
5 days ago
Reply

Elaine,
The 4th Commandmenmt was given at creation:
Gen 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Gen 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Gen 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

God, Adam, and Eve, all reasted and enjoyed God's creation according to the commandment

We can have no better lesson book than nature. "Consider the lilies of the field; . . . they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Let the minds of our children be carried up to God. It is for this that He has given us the seventh day and left it as a memorial of His created works. {CG 55.1}

Bill Garber
5 days ago
Reply

Of course, David, reading the rest of the conversation that includes 'The Sabbath was made for man' reveals it to be a conversation between Jews with regard to how Jews were to 'keep' the Sabbath. There is nothing in the conversation suggesting that Jesus recognized the Sabbath as predating Judaism or was universal. Rather he is addressing Sabbath in terms of a Jew, himself, and of Jewish leaders who were using the Sabbath to abuse their fellow Jews. Jesus could just as well have said, the Sabbath was made for me. I wasn't made for the Sabbath. And his hearers would have felt equally insulted.

Indeed the phrase, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' may well be, indeed inferentially appears to be referring to exactly the introduction of the Sabbath at the launch of the Jewish nation. I must admit that in following up here, I was a little surprised not to have
found the word Sabbath in Genesis, though I'm sure Elaine knew that. Contrary to how I felt, Sabbath as a word is not mentioned until Exodus 16:23. Oh, and for what it is worth, the word Sabbath does not appear in Revelation, either.

In the spirit of not letting old-earthers go without a challenge, your sport, David, Elaine seems to be doing quite well not letting theological inferentialist get buy with assumptions equally deserving to be challenged.

That said, the two of your would be most interesting dinner guests at the same table. I'd pick up the tab!

Stephen Foster

Ron,

Again on the subject of questioning institutional authority, or the authority of institutions, isn’t it what things are being institutionalized that matters? To the extent that any church dares to institutionalize a man-made tradition by first rationalizing said tradition to the point that it teaches the tradition as doctrine; that would obviously be a "problem."

Which brings us to Elaine; who has a problem with Adventists upholding the Biblically sanctioned, God-ordained and sanctified Sabbath of the Lord—in the face of tradition to the contrary. The “Sabbath was made for Jews” argument flies in the face of Jesus’ teaching. But of course this is further rationalized by claiming that Paul’s contextual letters contradict and supersede his Lord’s clear and timeless instruction, which they do not; or by claiming that Jesus’ reference to “man” applies only to Jews—as if He Himself is only Lord of the Jews—which is of course patently ridiculous.

Trevor Hammond

Bill Garber is saying that because cigarettes isn't mentioned in the Bible either, so it's a good argument for the Christian Church to condone smoking. Huh?

(Are some of you guys saying 'the boat (sabbath) sank'?)

1] God did REST on the seventh day of the Creation account in Genesis:

Gen 2:2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.
Gen 2:3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

2] Take note - just past Revelation there is a new heaven and earth and Guess what day we will worship on? I'll give you a clue: it starts with S. (but it ain't Sunday)

Isa 66:22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

Isa 66:23 From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to
worship before me, declares the LORD.

3] Here's Jesus (a Sabbath Keeper Himself and the Creator who rested on the Seventh day too) talking about some time in the future which is obviously after his death and resurrection. Matt 24:20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

The Sabbath was NEVER done away with, although many, even today, try their level best to SINK it. It is obviously not something unbelievers are keen on. Only those searching for Truth see the SENSE of what the Sabbath is all about (seventh day rest / no. 4 in the immutable Ten Commandments / a perpetual sign). It WILL BE the final test that will divide the true worshippers of God Almighty and those who opt for the spurious counterfeit man made religion of ancient Babylon and Egypt ... and now Ro3. <--- ?

In the Christ of the Holy Sabbath

T

Ranald McLeish

Am I to understand that there are not only Adventists who are quite happy to do away with the Sabbath,there are SdA's who are quite happy to do away with the Lord of the Sabbath. The surprizeis, or is it a surprize, this is apparently the current teaching of the SdA Church to day. ie. Not only has a Papal host killed Christ and replaced the Heavenly host, the Papacy's persecuting rule will continue for 2,300 years!!!

While the debate continues regarding the Sabbath, I am surprized all remain quiet regarding these new teachings.

One senior minister has responded as follows:-

If that is the case, when is Michael going to stand up, or is He there with his hands tied behind his back?
Or it may be that the 2300 days is just beginning and we got the prophecy wrong !!! Now that is a thought that could blow the Big boys away.

Vernon P. Wagner

If a 7th Day Baptist had not joined the Whites, would they have advocated switching from their Mehtodist roots to observing the Jewish sabbath? I'm not knocking the sabbath thing, but it WAS given to the Jews. Watching Jews observe it in Israel is simply beautiful. The Whites decided to keep dietary laws, tithing, and the 7th day while ignoring the rest. In what way did EGW's decision differ from that of Joseph Smith who chose to advocate polygamy?

In '07, I toured Israel with a group of non-SDA Christians. We shared communion in front of the Garden Tomb. The blessing we all felt at that time & place can't be fully described.

Elaine Nelson
Vernon, you are reminding us of what many know: the FOUR unique Adventist "pillars" are all directly from Judaism, and none from the NT:

1. Sabbath
2. Unclean meats
3. Tithing
4. Sanctuary doctrine, including the interpretation of Daniel's prophecies.

Now, if we are Christians, isn't it strange that the SDA doctrines not held by any other Christian body are directly from the Hebrew Bible?

Bill Garber has also asked a question: where, in the entire Hebrew Bible, is there a command or account of anyone observing sabbath until several thousand years later at Sinai? To claim a consistent "chain" from creation has absolutely no substantiation. Such a claim in a student paper would demand documentation or receive a failing grade.

Bill Garber
5 days ago
Reply

Trevor, I would love for you to join Elaine and David for dinner. I'd sure pick up the tab. You are a master of inferences. I suppose, truth be told, we all are, and without choice in this regard.

In any event, at dinner I'd be interested in hearing the three of you converse about a more pressing as well as personal matter, soteriology. Sort this out, and quite possibly the other items that draw such attention of those posting here, no matter the original topic, will lose their urgency ... or not as the case may be.

Perhaps we could start by asking, What role do we allow the Seventh-day Adventist church as a church and as a compendium of beliefs to play in our personal understanding of soteriology for us individually and for humanity in the main? To what extent does this, rather than 'plain scripture,' determin what we 'find' in scripture?

That said, it may be more a social than a soteriological attraction. Despite the manifest differences here, there are undeniable attractions, if yet undefined.

Melissa Howell
5 days ago
Reply

This is the first chance I've had to read through the 50+ comments on this blog, and I know it may be a bit off topic for what is currently being discussed at the moment, but I just feel the need to say this:

Do you realize, that many of you people have the easiest jobs here? You get to be the critics. You get to rant and complain and point fingers, you get to take words and turns of phrases and twist them to your heart's content to soothe your tired arguments. Many of you do comment kindly or at minimum sincerely, and I thank you for that. Many of you are honest seekers, and it does my heart good to read your posts. But too many others of you have been dragging around giant bags of issues for decades, and instead of forgiving and leaving this poison behind, you log onto this site and infect others with it too. I just can't see how this is helping anyone, yourselves included. And I find myself wondering why you claim to love or belong to a church that you seem to only wish to tear to shreds; why you claim to have honest open minds when your hearts are embittered and shut...
to the possibility that faith just might be beyond even your ability to explain.

Over the year that I have been involved with Adventist today, I admit that some of the worst faces I have ever seen shown in our church have been shown to me right here on this site. I would be ashamed for a student of mine to read your threads. I would be downright afraid for an unchurched person to visit this site and read your comments, because I'm not sure why anyone would want either a relationship with Jesus or a place in this church after seeing what goes on here.

This site was started as a means to provide an open forum for honest seekers and sincere questions and conversation. It has instead turned into a battleground of vicious attacks, where the faithless bow at the idols of their own reason. I had hoped we were better than this, people. I know my church is better than this. And if you are still choosing to be a part of it, yes, even if and especially if you don't quite agree with everything - then please, think about what we are doing here. Are your comments going to bring anyone closer to Jesus? Are they going to be helpful in building faith, or do you actually want to destroy faith? If you enjoy causing the faith of others to stumble, I can only say this: I would not want to be you on judgment day. God help us all, for that matter.

Most of you who write in are highly intelligent individuals. My prayer is that you would use your gifts and your intellect to build God's kingdom up, not to tear it down. And God's kingdom stretches far beyond the confines of Adventism, to include all of us. This site could be a place where we actually learn to coexist, and to solve the real problems of Adventism and Christianity together. I constantly read your complaints against Adventist theology and practice and life, but hardly EVER do I read someone making a positive suggestion, trying to help, solving a problem, or endeavoring to come up with a working idea. That's what we need! We don't need more people tearing this church to shreds! We need people who see it in all it's imperfection and yet still choose to be proactive - choose to find a way to help. To fix things. To bring some healing. We need answers, and this site is set up in such a way that we could find those answers together. Or in the absence of answers, we could find ways for this church to move forward anyways. It's far too easy to stand on the sidelines and criticize, as some of you have shown. It's infinitely harder roll up your sleeves and to try and solve the very problems you are criticizing.

Yes, there is a Time to Question - and God help us if we ever stop asking questions. But there is also a time to ask ourselves if we have come to cherish our questions and our skepticism, more than we cherish our faith and our Savior. Search your hearts, people, and I'll search mine: what is our goal here? And are you a worker in the harvest, or are you a thief breaking in to steal, kill, and destroy?

William Noel

Melissa,

There are times thwen you need to speak with kind illustration and times when you need to be direct. Your posting and many of the comments have illustrated the need for both. I greatly appreciate the kind and sensitive way in which you posed the original issue of our need to question and confirm the foundations of our faith. I also equally appreciate the direct way in which you have addressed those who would rather argue than learn. They've been earning that admonition for a long time. However, I do not expect they will pay much attention.
As for myself, memorizing the traditional proof texts and doctrinal models was a starting point beyond which I did not grow for a long time. It was only when I discovered that my faith was too weak to help me face major challenges that I began to re-examine the foundations of my faith and really study why I believed what I claimed to believe. The result has been a greater strengthening of my faith than I could have imagined. So I advocate everyone re-studying the basis for their faith, not to reaffirm their memorization of proof tests but to really get to know God.

Elaine Nelson

Melissa,

Did it not occur to you that the "baggage" you refer to is still dragging the Adventist church down, down below the level of rationality? Where are the new and intelligently educated converts? People who are taught to question many of the Adventist stated beliefs that have no reasonable explanation. It shouldn't be necessary to enumerate, but here are a few:

The Great Controversy theme. This cannot be biblically supported without unique-to Adventist interpretation with making assumptions that are accepted by no biblically trained scholars outside of Adventism.

The Sanctuary doctrine with the 2300-day prophecy. Those who have been educated in world and especially Christian history, can smell the twisted interpretations of a prophet, Daniel, who wrote AFTER the events--not a difficult manner, and yet called "prophecy.

Clean/unclean meats. This is straight from the Levitical code that even most Adventists reject, but have chosen to select this out of many while rejecting others--such as planting two crops in the same field, or wearing clothes of two different fabrics.

These are simply a few. To accept Adventism as it currently stands, one has to leave his rational thinking (God DID give us minds to think) and simply accept the SDA proposition.

Kevin Riley

Elaine

I know a number of educated SDAs who have questioned the beliefs you list and still decided to remain SDA. I think you underestimate the amount of thinking many of us have done. Yes, there are inconsistencies and contradictions. The way our doctrines are presented is too often overly simplistic and some of us find that frustrating. But there is much about the SDA church
and its beliefs and practices that is appealing. It seems at times you have accepted a liberal view of
Christian history with no more thought than many SDAs give to SDA doctrine. There are
other ways of viewing Christian history among scholars that are closer to SDA views.

What frustrates me most about this site is that it seems to have an overabundance of people for
whom religion is primarily something to be argued. I do not find oppositional religion attractive,
whether it is your brand based on the left, or that of others based on the right. Your beliefs do
not offend me, but they don't tempt me to join you either. The same is true of others here who
push a conservative line. You are fighting a brand of Adventism, and they are defending a brand
of Adventism, that no longer exists in my world. I attend a church where a range of views on
many subjects are held, yet we exist as a community. The issues you keep fighting just don't
seem like they need to be fought over. I believe Sabbath keeping and tithing are good spiritual
disciples. Others in my church believe they are divine laws that must be kept, while still others
don't think they matter that much at all, they just enjoy worshipping with their SDA family.
When we get together on Sabbath to worship God, it doesn't make that much difference really.

I believe you will get a lot of agreement that we need to ask good questions and find good
answers. But that doesn't mean that good answers to good questions will automatically lead to us
abandoning SDA doctrine in the way you seem to believe it will.

---

**David**

4 days ago

Bill I’ll love to have a dinner with Elaine and you, I can assure that will be great one. I’d pay for
you guys it will be fun. Now let’s go to the business. You wrote “Jesus could just as well have
said, the Sabbath was made for me. I wasn't made for the Sabbath” the fact is he did not... because
he wanted to put in the right perspective. He could also say the Sabbath was made for the
Israelites... o for the Jews... on better for the Jew man. He did not, He just said for man... simple
“man” “man” “man” because he was refereeing to the all humanity, take a look in the Greek. The
key question is when was made the Sabbath and for who? Look your Bible... on the week of the
creation after the man was created. So I take what Jesus said “the Sabbath was made for the cause
of man” so my friend, Adam was a men like Enoch, like Abraham, like you and me. The Sabbath
was made for all of us. Just enjoyed is good for the body and spirit. Remember is the only day
which was blessed.

I’m not a dog, an ape or tiger, I just I’m a man, therefore the Sabbath is for me. If was a dog, a cat
a cute ape or descendent of one I’ll not care about it.
I guarantee you in our diner we will have good time and plenty of laughs.

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**Elaine Nelson**

4 days ago

One, even two days free from work is common in most civilized countries. There is no need to
specify one, and only one day, particularly when originally given at Sinai, the former slaves had
never had a day free from work.

That a specific day is mandated is impossible when we know today, what was unknown by Bible
writers, that the world was round, that a sabbath in Judea was not sabbath on the other side of
the world. Thus, A seventh day is dependent on a particular calendar, and as there were no calendars
in Israel, sabbath was determined by the moon, and it is well known that the new moon is seen
every 28 days, making the seventh day, on the moon, as the Israelites did, fall on different days of
the calendar week which is observed today.
If Adventists claim to observe the same day in perpetuity and continuity, they have discarded the calculation of sabbath as was specified in the Bible: 2 Chron. 2:4; 2 Chron 24:31; 2 Chron. 8:13; Neh 10:33; Is. 1:13; 66:23; Ezek. 46:3; Amos 8:5; Col 2:16. These texts all show that the week Sabbath days fall on the phases of the moon and NOT on a set day in man's humanly-devised calendar.

Stephen Foster 4 days ago Reply

Elaine,

Speaking of critical thinking, do Jews recognize the wrong (weekly) Sabbath? If they do not, then how on earth could you imply, or claim, that Adventists do?

Elaine Nelson 4 days ago Reply

There would be no sabbaths except for the Jews from whom Adventists got it. We accepted not only Sabbath but many of their rules for proper observance: no lighting fires, no work, but not the punishment of stoning for breaking such rules. We also later chose their designation of the beginning and end of a sabbath day from sundown to sundown, not the calendar position from 12 am to 12 am.

In ca. 360 A.D., Hillel II changed the Jewish calendar based on the new moon to a fixed day calendar demanded by the Romans. "Until that time Jews observed sabbath according to the moon's phases. The emergence of the moon from darkness to light is a picture of God's salvation for the Jewish people and our personal deliverance from darkness to light. In Talmudic times, the day marking the New Moon was fixed by actual observation by at least two witnesses. As soon as the new moon was visible as a waxing crescent, the Sanhedrin in Israel was informed (by the blowing of trumpets from mountain top to the next) and Rosh Chodesh was formally announced, only to be discarded by Hillel 11 in 360 A.D.)

"The day after the new moon was sighted was a festival, heralded with sounding of the shofar and commemorated with convocations and sacrifices. Knowing precisely when Rosh Chodesh began was critical to the order of the appointed times commanded by the Lord. In fact, the entire Jewish calendar for the festivals and holidays would be lost. Therefore, during times of persecution, the Jews were often forbidden to observe Rosh Chodesh as well as Shabbat, in order to keep them from obeying God." (Hebrew for Christians www.hebrews4christians.com)

This was the calculation from the first Sabbath given at Siani and during the time Jesus lived and 300 years later.

Ranald McLeish 4 days ago Reply

Is Elaine right for the wrong reasons?

As the official teaching of the SdA Church is currently, that Christ has been killed as a result of the Papal attack against the Heavenly sanctuary, that the Heavenly Host has been replaced by a Papal
host, and that the Papacy reigns for 2,300 years:-

1. Wouldn't the Sabbath pass away with the death of the Lord of the Sabbath?
2. Those who question the above need to be aware that to challenge this teaching, has been, and continues to be considered a violation of the voted Fundamental Beliefs, an offence punishable with disfellowshipment.
3. Presumably the reason why few wish to question the current teaching.
4. The teaching has been questioned, the charge has ben laid and upheld, no right of appeal was granted.
5. Such action would appear to confirm this is currently the Official Teaching of the SdA Church to day.

Trevor Hammond

Mrs. Nelson and other Sabbath detractors fail to acknowledge (in their predictable efforts to excuse and defend unbelief in the True Seventh-day Sabbath), that Jesus (the Creator) rested at Creation, on the seventh day. As Lawgiver and Covenant Maker (which was ratified by blood), He gave His immutable Law at Sinai. Then, as Saviour, He admirably upheld the requirements of His Holy Law (which INCLUDES the SABBATH) and honoured its requirements at the Cross as the Lamb of God ‘which was for sinners slain’. He honoured the Sabbath in death and rested in the tomb during its sacred hours. Jesus DID keep the Sabbath and unequivocally reveals himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath too. I might add too, that Jesus, the Bible and the Sabbath among others, is not exclusively for Christians but for the whole world. Even the Israelites (pre-Cross) were ‘supposed’ to have been ambassadors for Christ and witnesses of God’s plan of salvation as seen in the very significant Sanctuary Services. God rested and gave us a '24' hour weekly time paradise which affords believers the opportunity for spending 'quality' time which their Saviour and Friend. The Jews were called to 'remember' the Sabbath day but it most certainly didn't belong to them exclusively. The Sabbath will be God's final test which will distinguish between those who obey God and those who CHOOSE to disobey.

Stephen Foster

Elaine,

With all respect, it is unclear to me what you are talking about. You cited texts that refer to moons and sabbaths and then claimed, “These texts all show that the week Sabbath days fall on the phases of the moon and NOT on a set day in man's humanly-devised calendar.”

Those texts do not refer exclusively to the weekly Sabbaths, if indeed at all to the weekly Sabbaths. If I understand you correctly you are implying that Jewish people now observe the seventh day of each week, but prior to approximately 360 A.D. they did not; because the calendar, if extant, was different.

You then, “logically” also have to be saying that the Jews NEVER actually “remembered the Sabbath day” as God commanded in Exodus 20:8 because there wasn’t a seven day cycle of Sabbath observance prior to approximately 360 A.D., and that even if there was (a seven day cycle), they ignored it for purposes of weekly Sabbath observance and only looked to the moon for any observance of any Sabbath (and/or lost track of which day was which when the calendar was
changed, or something to that effect). Respectfully of course, this all begs the question, are you serious?

Perhaps the site http://www.jewfaq.org/calendar.htm would be helpful. The weekly cycle has not been changed.

David

It not surprise that Holly day of the Lord, the Sabbath, is been attacked from different fronts. There is enough evidence to show that Sabbath from Eden is the same the one recorded in Exodus, the one that Jesus observed and one we have today. The words wrote by EGW are been fulfilled in front of our eyes "The worst enemies of the people of God will be the ones at one time the new the true"

Elaine Nelson

David, since you are offering this evidence, please furnish your references:

"There is enough evidence to show that Sabbath from Eden is the same the one recorded in Exodus, the one that Jesus observed and one we have today."

Elaine Nelson

Stephen, from the link you gave me (which I have previously seen):

"The lunar month on the Jewish calendar begins when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon. In ancient times, the new months used to be determined by observation. When people observed the new moon, they would notify the Sanhedrin. When the Sanhedrin heard testimony from two independent, reliable eyewitnesses that the new moon occurred on a certain date, they would declare the rosh chodesh (first of the month) and send out messengers to tell people when the month began."

There was no possible method for the Israelites to calculate time except by the moon, and God gave the lights (sun and moon) for seasons, and the entire Jewish economy centered around all their feasts and festivals solely by the moon. Sabbath was the first of all these "solemn festivals" found in Lev. 23. All revolved around the Sabbath as the pivot point. And the first new moon signaled the count-down for the Sabbath.

This was in effect until 360 when the Jewish calendar (which did not coincide with the secular calendar then in use) was discarded in favor of the fixed calendar which has been in use to the present day. Until that date, sabbath, as well as all the festivals, were computed by the moon as a constant. Note how many times in the Bible the new moon and Sabbath are used together in a text. Even at creation, God created these "lights" in the sky for signs, seasons, and for days, and years.

No one has shown yet how the ancient peoples calculated time other than those "lights." Nor is there a single text evidencing that either the sabbath was given for man at creation, or anyone prior to Sinai even recognized there was a sabbath. For Adventists, who are always eager to quote texts,
there is a very noticeable absence of any text giving man a sabbath to observe prior to Sinai. Only assumptions.

A Babylonian text "specifically indicates the seventh, fourteenth, twen-first, and twenty-eighth days as those of Sin, the moon-god (Cunieform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum).

Another relevant text, the Bablonian Epic (ca. 3000 B.C.), the gods created the world in almost the exact order as given in Genesis 1, including the gods rested on the seventh day! The English word for "week" comes from the Teutonic word for change---indicating the change of the phases of the moon." God's calendar was given to man in the heavens; man has adapted and changed with the modern calendar, but long before then, the sun and moon were the ancient's calendar. Had the Jews counted every seven days between sabbaths, why is the "new moon" consistently connected with sabbath, even in the NT?

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Stephen Foster

Elaine,

Your problem is not with Adventism, or Adventists, it is with Judaism and Jews. Again, you have to be saying that the Jews somehow lost track of the counting of days (as measured by sunrises and sunsets) when the monthly calendar was altered; something for which there is absolutely no evidence to be found anywhere.

In desperately attempting to delegitimize the Sabbath your pattern is one of asking sabbatarians to prove a negative; while at the same time running (as in denial) from the negative assumptions that you make. For instance, your bases for delegitimizing the weekly “Sabbath of the Lord thy God” are that there is no Biblically recorded commandment to observe the sanctified seventh day of the weekly cycle prior to Sinai, and that you do not believe that there is any New Testament scripture commanding followers of Jesus to observe the Sabbath, “as His custom was.”

Meanwhile you deny the multiple evidentiary references to the Sabbath and its significance, ownership, purpose, and proper observance in the New Testament; and the now incredibly claim that not even the Jews understand the Sabbath since they somehow can’t keep track of time by the sun’s daily rising and setting, according to…uhm, you.

No pun intended here (well, then again, sure it is), but your statement that “there was no possible method for Israelites to calculate time except the moon…” is nothing short of ludicrous, partially because it is immediately followed by “…and God gave the lights (sun and moon) for seasons…”

The sun is used to measure days, Elaine, of which the weekly Sabbath is one. The moon, of course, is used for keeping track of months and seasons.

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Stephen Foster

Edit- "...and you now incredibly claim that not even the Jews..."
Stephen, you say the moon is used for keeping tracks of months and seasons, which God gave at Creation. Did the Jews count on their fingers, or mark on a stick every seven days? According to the Bible record, they began counting from each new moon, which is well known does not result in sabbath falling on the same day each month, but would be: When the New Moon is visible, 7 days hence is Sabbath, and until the next New Moon is 28 days, etc. If the Jewish system was used, Sabbath would eventually fall on every day of the week--Sunday to Saturday, not each Saturday. I.E., The New Moon comes on Sunday, the 28th; the next new moon will be Tuesday, Sept. 27; the next new moon will be Wednesday, Oct. 26; the New Moon for November will fall on Nov. 25, a Friday; and the last new moon of the year will be Sat., Dec. 24. This is the Jewish method of determining the Sabbath, as well as the other festivals: Rosh Hashanah is on Sept. 29, Thursday; The first day of Sukkot is Thursday, Oct. 13; and Wed, Dec. 21 is the First Day of Hanukkah. These all were given for the Jews as festivals to be remembered at the same time Sabbath was listed in Lev. 23 as important festivals to be remembered in perpetuity.

Why have Adventists adopted only one of these special days while ignoring the others, and also ignoring the calculation given by God for determining when the Sabbath began? The often quoted text in Isaiah also combines both: "From one new moon to another and from one sabbath to another shall all flesh come to bow down before me." Adventists claim sabbath will be observed in the new earth, but what about the New Moon?

Stephen, you continue to claim Christians were commanded to observe the sabbath. Please, one, only one text addressed to Christians, not Jews, that sabbath should be observed.

Look the literary beauty of the 4th commandment is in a form of chiasm.

1. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
2. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.
3. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns

2. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.
1. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The number ones (1) message is “the Sabbath is holy”
The number two (2) message is work six days but the seven is Sabbath (rest)
The number three (3) message is not work.
Now the first number one, two and three is the human response to the example given by the Creator in the later one and two.
Why I keep the Sabbath Holy? (1) Because the Lord made it holy (1)
Why should I work six days and the seventh kept as Sabbath (rest) 2. Because the Lord made in six days the heavens, earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested in the seventh day.
Enjoyed the Sabbath is good for body mind and the spirit The Sabbath was, is, and will be always a holly and blessed day, Never the humans or the demons will take away this characteristic of this
special day.

Stephen Foster
2 days ago

So...amazingly, you are saying—no, actually insisting—that the Jewish people could not keep track of the rising and setting of the sun!

The moon was to keep track of months, seasons, and was used to delineate or designate the festival Sabbaths. Arguing this is practically tantamount to arguing whether the sun literally rises and sets.

As to your New Testament challenge, I'm tempted to do a Reagan-to-Carter “there you go again;” but instead, let’s make a deal. When you produce the text that says that the Sabbath should no longer be recognized (much less remembered), or that it has been changed, or that Jesus only referred to the Jews in His “Sabbath was made for man” statement, or that “Lord of the Sabbath” actually refers to the “fact” that Jesus claimed to be Lord of some other day, or that “heaven and earth” has, in fact, passed away, or that “heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is” in any particular portion of the Bible changes that reality.

Again, it is not for me to judge anyone regarding what day they observe; nor practically anything else, for that matter.

David
2 days ago

There is a limit until how much one person can refuse... after that this passage will apply to them “They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness”

Elaine Nelson
2 days ago

That is NOT what I said. I said that the MOON was their way to mark "months" and days. The sun, as is well know, demarcates both days and years, but cannot mark "special" days and according to Lev. 23 these "special" days, including sabbath were counted from the new moons, not the sun. The moon is consistently mentioned in connection with these days, while the sun is rarely, if ever mentioned. Read Lev. 23 to check how the "month" which was measured by the moon and sabbath: Passover (day after sabbath); Feast of Weeks (calculated by Sabbath); The Day of Atonement, another day of sabbath rest; The Feast of Tabernacles, also determined by month. many of which were a specified number of days from the new moon or sabbath.

What method would an ancient culture use to measure time other than the sun and moon? In an agrarian culture, all days were more or less alike, unless there was a superior way of marking them. Today, workers 5 days a week, with a calendar, live a different life with certain things to be done
on certain days. The moon, from which the word "month" is derived, was always computed by the 
New Moon until the modern calendar was instituted in the fourth century.

The Christians were using the modern calendar by the fourth century. Until then, without a 
calendar, the moon was the significant marker, and as the Bible clearly shows, it was the most 
important marker for the Jewish special days.

I first requested that you furnish a single NT text commanding CHRISTIANS to BEGIN observing 
sabbath. You are requesting a negative (a statement they should no longer keep sabbath) while I 
am requesting a POSITIVE statement that sabbath should be observed by GENTILE 
CHRISTIANS, not Jewish-Christians.

Without a COMMAND to CHRISTIANS to observe the seventh day, it is without substantiation--
unless you can disclose it.

The OT is not the Christian's final source, but the NT; otherwise there would be no Christ, nor 
Christians. Christians no longer command circumcision, offer sacrifices, observe all the feasts, nor 
drop Jewish practices--except for Adventists who choose Sabbath and unclean meats while 
ignoring all the feasts COMMANDED by God. How were such doctrinal choices made? When did 
Jesus ever abrogate those practices above? Who gave the apostles permission to abrogate them? 
IOW, if there weren't any changes with Christianity, why not simply be Jewish?

Kevin Riley

Elaine

Would the use of 7 names for the days of the week before 360 AD not argue for people being able 
to keep track of a 7 day week? I would have thought the simplest understanding of 'the seventh 
day' would be 'every 7 days', not 'every 7 days from the new moon'. Will you also argue that other 
anient people with 7 or 10 day cycles were not able to keep track of the days, or is it just the Jews 
and Christians who could not?

Elaine Nelson

Except for the Sabbath day, the individual days of the week have no names, just numbers in 
Judaism.

The name for days of the week have Teutonic or Roman origin, and are named after respective 
gods. 
The Mayans had a very early calendar, but their weeks were of different length.

Prior to the fourth century, the Jews merely had numbers for the days of the week. If every day is 
the same, as would be for sheep and goat herders, unlike today when we have different duties, etc., 
on specific days. The entire camp had a designated individual to trumpet the new moon and the 
Sanhedrin notified the people. This is the method when there was no calendars and no other form 
of communication to a large group of people. Is there another reason that the almost continued use 
of New Moon and Sabbaths in the same sentence?
Elaine,

You did say that the Jews had “no possible method…to calculate time except by the moon…” and you did facetiously question whether the Jews “[counted] on their fingers, or [marked] on a stick every seven days.” So you shouldn’t deny (“That is NOT what I said.”) my summarization of your position: that you are saying that “Jewish people could not keep track of the rising and setting of the sun!”

Despite the “positive” references to the Decalogue by Jesus in the New Testament, you have nonetheless always challenged the Sabbath’s continued validity by arguing that the supposed non-existence of an additional (reinforcing?) command text (in the New Testament)—to continue to do that which is specifically identified as something to “remember” in the very Decalogue—defines abolishment.

This is the “negative” proposition to which I refer. This line of reasoning is often used in juvenile rationalization. “You didn’t say that I couldn’t take the car…” Is there a specific New Testament command to honor one’s parents, or not to use the Lord’s name in vain, or not to covet “anything,” or not to bow and worship graven images?

I know you find this hard to accept, and that this is for you an inconvenient truth, but Jesus’ words about (and references to) the Sabbath were for followers of Him—otherwise/later known as Christians.

That said it is not for me to judge anyone regarding a day of observance. As the late, great Freddy Prinze used to say, “That’s not my job!”

You are putting words in my mouth that Jewish people could NOT keep track of the rising and setting of the sun."

Read back what I wrote which did not say that they could not count by the sun. The moon was the method they used to calculate sabbath as the new moon would be the signal for a trumpet to be blown to indicate the new moon—which was the beginning of a new month. Nothing about the sun to contribute to the sabbath. Where is the Sun and Sabbath mentioned together in the Bible? It is always "New moon and Sabbath," in more than half a dozen texts.

I totally recognize Jesus' saying "The Sabbath was made for man." Jesus was a Jew; he lived and died as a Jew and observed all their rituals (most of which Adventists reject today, excepting Sabbath), and he never addressed a single Gentile Christian. Jews continued to observe the seventh day; circumcision, and all their sacrifices until the temple was destroyed. After it was destroyed, there is no more evidence of Jewish Christians, only Gentile Christians which became the church from that time onward and they began celebrating the day of the Resurrection before the end of the first century.

Where did Jesus ever abrogate circumcision, sacrifices, food offered to idols, or even address Christians, of whatever ethnicity? Did the Holy Spirit instruct the apostles to do so? Jesus never did.
Are you contending that there was absolutely no change in the Jewish system to Christianity? What, if anything was changed? Did the Gentiles immediately adopt all the Jewish law?

Since Jesus never personally converted a single Gentile, if we believe the Bible, Paul was given the mission to the Gentile Christians, and he, and the apostles were directed by the Holy Spirit not to impose on them "the very burden tht neither we nor our ancestors wer strong enough to support." All the NT supports the change from Judaism to Christianity. Either the Gentiles were to become Jewish before becoming Christian or they were "saved in the say way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus."

In his letter to Galatians and the Colossians, Paul explained that the Law was until Christ came and you are now no longer under the Law (the Law included Sabbath, did it not?) Please explain your exegesis of Paul, who converted and built the Christian church, not the Jewish.

All I'm asking: give me any text showing that the Gentile Christians were to begin observing sabbath if they were to be accepted as members of the Christian church.

"Why have Adventists adopted only one of these special days while ignoring the others, and also ignoring the calculation given by God for determining when the Sabbath began?"

Because it's convenient.

Back to topic: when a 4 year old can ask good questions....hmmm.

I asked my pastor dad some pretty good questions too not that much older. His good ole SDA answers did not satisfy. I'm no longer SDA or anything else. Makes an intelligent person wonder doesn't it???

Use strange bait, catch strange fish.

Elaine: I admire you for keeping up the good fight. On this battlefield you'll never win, but you are educating a LOT of lurkers who don't care enough to STUDY. This always amazes me. The hardest BIBLE supporters/pew warmers are usually the least knowledgeable about their Bibles. At most, they read approved books ABOUTBible but rarely darken the pages. You have done the hard work of studying and know whereof you speak. Isnt it odd that there are practically no pastors who post their own views on here? Oh well. They value their paychecks as well I suppose they should. From one PK to another, dont let the bastards get you down.
Stephen Foster

The question about what you implied in saying that Jews had “no possible method…to calculate time except the moon…” and your questioning whether the Jews “[counted] on their fingers, or [marked] on a stick every seven days,” is not an open one, Elaine. I will let your words stand.

If I asked you on what authority was the weekly observance of the Sabbath abrogated, would that be the inverse of your question about a New Testament text commanding its continued observance? Is “church history” or tradition the rule of faith and practice for followers of Jesus; or is it the Bible?

Genesis 2: 3 says that the seventh day was blessed and set apart for holy use. If I’m not mistaken, this occurred about 2,500 years before there were any Jews. Christians are followers of Jesus. You cannot limit what He said to the Jews, because He was sent that “whosoever believeth in Him” should be saved. Since there is no Biblical indication that the blessing of the seventh day has been removed, or that the God-ordained sanctification of the seventh day has been either done away with, or transferred to any other day, and since Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath, and clearly implied that it would have continuing relevance and significance after His death; the fact that He was a Jew, or that His contemporary listeners were Jews, is practically, if not absolutely, irrelevant.

In answer to your question about what changed for followers of Jesus upon the incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is that that which pre-figured or typified His sacrifice became passé after His sacrifice; but of course, you already knew that.

Stephen Foster

Oops! I almost forgot to add my Pauline disclaimer: it is not appropriate for me to judge anyone regarding what day they observe. Does this apply to everyone?

Elaine Nelson

Gen. 2:2-3:

"And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created an made."

Note: there is not a single mention of humans, but only God who had worked, had completed His work, and rested from His work. Making assumptions when there are no texts is so frequently done in Adventism that unless one carefully checks, they are simply not true. No command for humans, who had done no work, that they should rest, as it was their FIRST day, only God's seventh working day.

Genesis was not written when it occurred, but approximately one thousand years B.C., and is credited to the priests who both wrote about the sabbath both in the Torah and in their exhortations to return to sabbath as they believed it was the reason for their captivity.

If Christians are "followers of Jesus" why do they disregard most of his examples: circumcision,
sacrificial offerings, observance of special feast days? The Sabbath cannot be shown to originate
for mankind at Eden, else where is there a single record of its observance before Sinai?

That Christians were to observe the Sabbath once they became Christians, is nowhere mentioned
in the NT. So many unproved assumptions that these statements simply won't fly with Bible
students.

BTW: I am neither a Sunday-keeper, no advocating Sunday or any day as a worship day (the
seventh day was originally given as a rest day--Israelites were to stay in their tents.

Traditions are found in all religions, Adventism not excepted. Adventists first adopted the calendar
day beginning and ending at midnight for Sabbath observance, then changed from sunset to sunset.
Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their condemnation of his working on Sabbath, and Adventists
have also become Pharisaical in their tortured attitude of work, defining certain work as important
and necessary while others are forbidden. This is Adventist tradition, not Jewish.

Adventists also adopted the traditions of the Roman Church when adopting the idea of the virgin
birth and the Trinity, as well as the human/divine nature of Christ which was settled in the fourth
century by that church. Adventists also adopted the system of governance used by the Roman
church, unlike the early church. To deny tradition, is to be ignorant of history. No institution is
free from tradition.

Elaine Nelson

We would know nothing of a day called Sabbath were it not for Judaism. Even the few times it is
mentioned in the NT, it was related to Jewish practice of Sabbath. Doesn't this indicate that
Adventism drew entirely for Judaism for its Sabbath observance, how and when, and its
importance? Jesus only had this to say about Sabbath: it was made for man, not man for Sabbath,
and his audience were Jews who were scrupulous in its observance, and he was chiding them for
their strict adherence to minute details.

Where was the scrupulosity of Sabbath-keeping for Christians? Where were Christians given the
Jewish feasts to observe? Where were Christians burdened by the Law? Where were Christians
given explicit rules and a covenant with God which they swore to uphold?

Judaism with its multitude of rules were largely adopted and brought into Adventism. The first
believers observed Sunday (it was called "Sabbath" in those days), and not until Rachel Oakes (?)
and one of two other influential people convinced the few Adventists that Sabbath was in the OT,
did they adopt Sabbath. IOW, the SDA "movement" was moving along as it gradually added
more strict rules for Sabbath keeping: no baths, no buying or selling, no lighting fires for cooking--
straight from the OT. Unclean meats, tithing, and the IJ were not originally in their doctrines.
Their tradition was like all other institutions, a gradually evolving force. Even as late as a few
years ago, the FBs were still be added and re-written and Adventists are expected to faithfully
observe each and every addition.

Will the real Adventist stand up? If some of its founders were here today would they even
recognize Adventism today?
That Christians were to observe the Sabbath once they became Christians, is nowhere mentioned in the NT. So many unproved assumptions that these statements simply won't fly with Bible students.

This statement is perhaps key to our disagreement. Ideally, Christians are nothing more—or less—than followers of Jesus, who believe Him to be their Creator and Savior. (If you dispute this, then we are not even talking about the same subject.) Therefore such a statement should actually acknowledge the fact that nowhere in the NT were Christians instructed to “no longer” observe the Sabbath. Of course, when juxtaposed with the fact that Jesus DEFINITELY made specific reference to the weekly Sabbath, and therefore had opportunity to instruct regarding it whatever He pleased, things should become clear. Surely He has demonstrated that He was never fearful of incurring the wrath of the Jews, nor of being accused of blasphemy, after all.

We would know nothing of a day called sabbath were it not for Judaism. Even the few times it is mentioned in the NT, it was related to Jewish practice of Sabbath. Doesn't this indicate that Adventism drew entirely for Judaism for its Sabbath observance, how and when, and its importance?

Obviously the first sentence here is true; but Acts 13:42-44 certainly proves beyond doubt that both Jews and Gentiles gathered in the synagogue on the Sabbath—as does Acts 18:4 for that matter.

Likewise, Jesus made mention of the Sabbath by saying more than it was “made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” as you erroneously claim. He also claimed to be the owner of the Sabbath, and that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, and that His followers should pray that their flight—whether it be at the destruction of Jerusalem or at the end of time—not be on the Sabbath. Besides, since the Sabbath was made for man, and set apart for Holy use (i.e, “sanctified”) at the end of Creation work—as the Bible says—it would follow that it was set apart for Holy use by God for mankind. So the fact that there is no record of command prior to Sinai is logically rendered meaningless.

You may have been traumatized by SDA tradition as others clearly have been. But get over it already, because throwing the baby out with the bathwater has never been advisable.
read, or hear Paul speak does not indicate they accepted it as a holy day to be observed anymore than your attendance at a Catholic church for a wedding or funeral indicates that you are now a Catholic. member and accept their doctrines.

If you cannot see the difference in these assumptions being made, I will simply drop it, as for someone who believes that assumptions and substantiations are the same, it is a waste of time.

As for personal suggestions of "traumatization" my experience is based on many years of studying Christian history to satisfy requirements for an advanced degree, and Adventism was not a requirement for that.

Elaine, who knows, we may have gotten somewhere!? It is clear that your point is that instead of the Bible, you believe that I should look to the history of the tradition of certain Gentiles. The problem is that those Gentiles with whom you are concerned were observing a day other than the Sabbath—as pagans.

The rationale that ran interference for the compromise that eventually occurred—and subsequently institutionalized—was, of course, the resurrection of Jesus. Without doubt the irony of all time is that while the death of Christ proves the immutability of God’s commandments, His resurrection is the very basis for rationalizing the institutional abrogation of the fourth commandment; certainly no mean feat.

Depending on where you matriculated of course, this should not be news to you; since you have actually studied this history for academic credit.

Stephen, the NT canon closed ca. 100-125 A.D. Much happened since then. In fact most of the Gospels were not written until at least a generation or more after Jesus' death, and in that time, much occurred: Paul was sent to the Gentiles of which Jesus could not have been aware.

You failed to tell me what day the pagans were observing. Yes, they had gods and were obligated to give offerings, but I am not aware of any special day they were observing, so please enlighten me. Yes, you must go outside the Bible to see how doctrines were established, as when the NT canon was closed many were not yet determined. It was not until 300 years later that some were even agreed upon! If Adventists relied solely on the Bible they would not have accepted the Trinity, the divine/human combination in Christ as that was never even mentioned in the Bible. It was established some 300 years later.

Tell me: the death of Jesus is the central theme for Christians, as symbolized by the cross on top or in the churches. But without his resurrection,, where would Christianity be? Is celebrating Christ's death as something to be memorialized? Adventists claim it is Creation, but this was the same reason given by and for Jews: memorializing Creation. The Jews did not recognize Christ, and for Christians to simply continue with the Jews of observing sabbath would be to ignore the Resurrection as having little importance. Is this true?
You may not remember, but I have been in Adventism for more than 80 years, and for most of that time both the Resurrection event and Easter was ignored as being a "Catholic" Holiday and Adventists should do nothing imitating Catholicism! Do you remember celebrating Easter as an Adventist? If so, it certainly wasn't so in the Bible Belt where I spent the first 20 years. IOW, for Adventists it was merely incidental as their name indicated they observed Sabbath and to recognize Easter or the Resurrection carried a stigma.

The Resurrection is the very central tem of Christianity, that is, excepting Adventism for whom the Sabbath and the Second Advent is central.

Yes, I got me graduate degree from a secular university and my undergraduate degree from a Jesuit University--no religion studied there at all. I chose my electives in graduate school and decided to write my thesis on the history of early Christianity--first 400 years. I wanted to know how, why, and what choices were made in establishing doctrines. How many Adventists, other than theology graduate students, have studied the history of Christianity? Most study the history of Adventism, but 1800 years before there was Adventism, there was a Christian church. This is where the doctrines were formulated and it was most tumultuous--not even a pretty sight! Most had nothing to do with religion but with political objectives in mind--not too different than today?

Stephen Foster

Ah, a little (educational) background sheds a lot of light; providing an interesting perspective.

First off, let’s be clear, it should be noted that there is nothing “of which Jesus could not have been aware.”

The observation of pagan custom to which I refer was, of course, the first day of the week, also known to some as the day of the sun. This is not to say that polytheists did not also “honor” other days of the week in a similar fashion (e.g., the moon day became Monday, etc.), but the established pagan veneration of the sun day catalyzed the political compromise from which the doctrine of tradition was institutionally birthed.

As you know, mutual convenience is the stuff of political compromise, and the coinciding of the resurrection on the first day of the week with the established veneration of the sun day became tradition’s parents.

The Jews obviously had made the Sabbath a burden by ridiculous restrictions which Jesus’ words and examples put in perspective. It however remained saddled with the stigma of restriction and therefore represented a political problem. Sunday presented no such problem, as it was recognized with festival without Judaism’s stigma.

While celebrating Christ’s death is important, it is more important to do so in the manner in which He Himself instructed. The symbols associated with Easter Sunday are understandably, of course, of pagan origin; as they are the natural result of compromise.

It is irrelevant whether doctrine was formed in 100 A.D. or 2011 A.D., or anywhere in
between. All that matters is whether the doctrine is Biblical; or not.

Elaine,

So how are we to explain what Jesus instructed His disciples to do?

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20 ESV)

What did Christ command them to observe and teach? Christ kept the Sabbath, maybe not in the same way the Jewish leaders did, but He did keep the Sabbath. And if you want the rest that He has given / is offering, the Sabbath is the day set aside for rest. Hence it is made for man, not Jews. The problem with the Jews, and many Adventists, they thought the Sabbath made them a special people, and lost sight of the significance of the Sabbath.

Your position about what's not written in the NT does not fly. If, as you've rightly acknowledged, the NT does not say anything about any change of Sabbath observance from Jew to Gentile, then you cannot backup your position from the Bible, and the Sabbath is a Bible concept, you ought to leave the subject alone. All you have is supposition... what you think. And that's not enough to convince me. And as Stephen observed, Paul, Jewish believers, and the Gentile believers observed the Sabbath.

What a delightful Blog, Melissa -

Not sure how I missed it. What would happen to my marriage if my attention was focused on finding fault with the perceived shortcomings of my wife? Why would I try to stay connected in any way with a person toward whom I felt resentment, anger and contempt? And why, once I left that marriage, would I follow my ex around with billboards telling all her friends and associates what an awful idiot she is? WOULD THAT BE SICK OR WHAT!! No finger pointing here, but if the shoe fits...

While the line between faith and doubt may be hard to discern, the trajectory of love is more obvious. I may not always be able to define it; but I know it when I see it. Doubt harbored by those who love the church for all its faults, as you point out, Melissa, is a far different matter than doubt expressed by those who only profess love for the church as they wish it to be. If the church is Christ's bride, should we love it, as it is, any less than He does?

Unfortunately, too many Adventists can only love the Church as they think it should be or as they think it was in some mental snapshot of a halcyon period that never existed. And so the oxygen and Spirit are sucked out of the Church by those who play tug-of-war with the organism on which they feed. If forced to choose between those who focus on building faith out of love for Christ, and those who encourage questions for the sake of truth, I will cast my lot with the former. Fortunately, the Church I love doesn't force me into such either-or false choices, and never has, except in the straw-man world of her detractors.
Nathan wrote:
"Doubt harbored by those who love the church for all its faults, as you point out, Melissa, is a far different matter than doubt expressed by those who only profess love for the church as they wish it to be. If the church is Christ's bride, should we love it, as it is, any less than He does?"

Now how does this work, it seems to me we have a denomination (SDA via Ellen White) that has a particular position which is to call many other churches apostate protestantism. So if we can do that to the churches that God loves how is it we can't say anything against perceived problems in our own denomination? Surely you are not using the church that God loves as only the SDA denomination, please explain.

Nathan Schilt
Now where did I say we shouldn't point out perceived problems in our own denomination? It is all a matter of context. Do we love the church as it is? I can't answer that question for you, but that doesn't mean it isn't an important question.

I have to say that I don't really think of the SDA Church denominational umbrella as my church. It's far too big and impersonal. I don't see how one can really love a denomination. I can't love a faith community until it begins to have identifiable faces and personal relationships that I feel. My local church faith community is the church that I love. There are no doubt people in my local church that see other Christian denominations as Babylon. They don't bother me. I have no interest in seeking them out and inquisitorially stringing them up as official representatives of all that's wrong with the church.

Ron Corson
Well isn't doubt in a church's answer a perceived problem? But it is OK, I did not expect you could really answer that as it was just to show that your previous statement really made no sense. And moving it to your local church does nothing at all nor the straw man of stringing them up as official representatives. It was a good deflection though, rather fitting with the article where the Christian wants to deflect from the child's statement instead of dealing with the statement properly.

Trudy Morgan-Cole
This column is great, Melissa, and the responses to it encapsulate virtually everything I find frustrating about SDA websites and discussion boards.

The column was about how the writer's four-year-old made a very perceptive and thoughtful statement about a Bible story, and that led the writer to think about the role of doubt in our spiritual journey and in our faith communities.

Then a few people pounced like predators on the word "doubt" and sparked a debate about ... the
Sabbath, I think? I'm not sure because I skimmed a lot, looking for any comments that might relate in some way to the original post.

There seem to me to be a lot of factions within and around the Adventist church -- including bitter, angry ex-Adventists who can't move on -- who love wrangling about theological issues that, to 99.9% of the world, are so arcane as to be laughable.

The way I interpret the four-year-old's statement that "the boat sank" is that it sounds like an early recognition of something that troubles devout children and adults too -- "You tell me that God calms the storm and solves all our problems, yet I still see and experience suffering and pain, and that's hard to square with your story of an all-powerful, all-loving God." A four-year-old can't articulate all that, but s/he can feel some of it, and it's wonderful if Christian parents and teachers can allow space where questions like these can be asked. It's also wonderful (and this is something I've struggled with learning for a lifetime) to be able to tell kids and adults that sometimes the answer is, "I don't know," that faith is not dependent on having all the right answers all the time.

In the real world, a lot more people are asking, "Why does the boat sink?" than "When and why did the change from Saturday to Sunday worship occur?" That's not to say that doctrinal questions are unimportant -- we need to allow space for our young people and ourselves to ask and explore those questions as well -- but they are the mint, anise and cumin of the spiritual journey, and too often we focus on them and neglect the weightier matters that people both within and outside our tiny Adventist bubble are crying out to hear about.

William Noel

Trudy!

Amen! Amen! Amen!

It is when we can answer the question "Why did my boat sink?" that we're making Christianity practical and able to win hearts and the Holy Spirit can use us.

Nathan Schilt

Yes and no…Melissa's son didn't ask why the boat sank. It is interesting that both Trudy and William read it that way. Rather, he made a declaration: "I think the boat sank," an assertion which defenders of Christ reflexively spring to refute. Precisely what he was thinking and imagining when he made the statement is unknown because Melissa, like a good soldier of Christ, responded defensively, instead of trying to figure out what her son had heard and what he was thinking. Our adult minds may be erroneously projecting our own questions and doubts into the conclusion - "I think the boat sank."

To the extent that the assertion could be reframed as "Why did the boat sink?" - a difficult question to answer if one doesn't accept the premise - I don't believe Christians serve the cause of Christ when they pretend to have abstract answers to questions about the harsh realities perceived and experienced in this earthly kingdom. Rather, I think we need to stick with the story. Once we truly hear and touch the heart of the questioner - and are we not at some times in our lives all the questioner - then I think we are in a position to go back to the lake, and back to the empty tomb, to help the doubter see the Master walking on the water - to remind the faith-challenged of a risen Lord. And then we can tell them of the times in our lives
when our ship was sinking, and we experienced Christ walking towards us, walking beside us, in the boat - but always with us on the stormy seas of our lives. Thus His story becomes our story, and our story His, and we can insanely and joyously proclaim with Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him!" That, I submit, is the only way to make Christianity practical.

Trudy Morgan-Cole  
1 day ago  
Actually, I did point out in my comment that the four-year-old made a statement, rather than a question. I do think the question is implicit in the statement, or at least that that statement will inevitably lead to that question, but you're right, it's important to hear what kids, as well as adults, are actually saying.

David  
1 day ago  
We will always have questions, but always have all the answers, nevertheless life continuous and or duty is to do the best of it. I hope that the best of our lives is not just writing in this blog. When was the last time we assisted a needed person? Or visited in their jails or hospitals? For sure our lives will have more meaning when we practice the basic principles of Christianity.

Elaine Nelson  
1 day ago  
This reminds me of the story of the little boy returning from Sunday School who was asked by his mother what he learned: He said: "the Israelites came to the Red Sea and the Army Corps of Engineers built a pontoon bridge and they all crossed over on dry land."

The mother asked: "Are you sure that is what you heard?"

He said, "If I told you what she really said, you wouldn't believe me!"

Trevor Hammond  
1 day ago  
Take two... for those who failed to read the tiny writing in the previous eye test.  
-----  
RE the crass statement posted somewhere above by Alle:  
"From one PK to another, dont let the b@st@rds get you down." (expletives edited)  

The AToday editor as well as Mr. Schilt, Dr. Taylor and Mrs. Elaine Nelson had a 'fat' lot to say when I mentioned that 'certain' people are shown partiality on this website, if they are (of course) from a certain camp that the site favours. The fact that this type of uncouth statement is allowed proves my point.

One may try and argue that my query isn't warranted and that the statement should be understood in the context of robust discussion ... then what about another such uncouth statement posted by Doctorf Doctorf1:

Elaine, This is one of the reasons I quit paying tithe a long time ago. I give it now directly to SDA
and Catholic charities. Scr3w the pontifical GC. (expletives edited)

I only mentioned 'apostates today' a few times and quickly got hassled about it yet the silence regarding these crass remarks shows them looking the other way when certain 'birds of a feather' make statements which reflect positions they support. Such are freely allowed to flourish as it condones and encourages the position of those from this camp which reveals the partiality I have spoken of. So editor what's the deal? Huh!

T

Trevor Hammond 22 hours ago Reply

RE: Mrs. Howell’s concerns regarding the comments on this blog in her post above:

Firstly, let me say (from what I have gathered), that Mrs. Howell is clearly a very committed and very caring mom and just the same exemplary caring person to her kids in class as an educator. Championing the cause of youth to make the right decisions and to go the right way, is always admirable and noteworthy. Been sympathetic to their experiences and challenges they face as well as robustly defending their need of certain questions and answers is noted too.

My main concern in all of this though, is the risk of trying so desperately to save them that we go to the overzealous extent of offering them a diluted secular/worldly influenced sub-standard compromised Christianity package which upholds and glorifies all forms of secular evils. To make matters worse we want to then also encouraging the trampling of the sacred teachings of scripture and the subtle disregard of SDA church standards and beliefs in an effort to win them over although we very well know that we just CAN'T save them no matter how much we may love them. There is only one way advocated by God: the way of the Cross. Traditional; historical; old fashioned; fundamental; relevant; the Cross is God’s way - even in the post modernized secular pluralistic abyss of a society filled with worldly living and sinfulness - the Cross is still the only answer to much of its questionings and murmurings.

We can only take others to the 'water' of life but in the end they will have to drink themselves...

T

Nathan Schilt 22 hours ago Reply

Trevor - The fact that AToday is parsimonious with censorship does not support a conclusion that it is partial towards particular viewpoints, as your frequently disputed, but welcome, posts prove.

Many of your concerns, I think, arise out of the fact that you grow uncomfortable when theological views are not delivered in the old wineskins of traditional Adventist accents, phrases, and cliches. Many of us, who may share your respect for tradition, prefer more contemporary idioms of thought and expression. I have no quarrel with the centrality of the cross. But beating "sinners" over the head with the cross, or hectoring those who see the cross through different windows than you do, is really a turn-off.

Get over yourself! There is no bias against you. The only bias is in favor of the Comment
Guidelines which, by their nature, require some subjective judgment. If you have a problem, direct it to the Blog editor. Whining in the comments section is really quite pitiful. Where is your pride, man?

Trevor Hammond 16 hours ago Reply

Parsimonious? Whining? Haha - So predictable. Mr Schilt is rather uncomfortable with the (traditional) views and questions of others and quickly finds excuse for this type of vulgarity. I guess we can just blame watching too many Hollywood ‘L’ restriction movies where ‘foul’ language is commonplace. Badgering me about my observations only brings what I said closer to home. Question is: “What if I were to have used common rude expletives, or perhaps the honourable GC president?” Bet it would make headlines on AToday. Have some no shame? Huh!
T

Trevor Hammond 14 hours ago Reply

By the way, Sir - stop the 'thinkers' whining SINdrome (sic), about the old fashioned traditional message of the Cross as this is the only 'very adequate' and comprehensive means provided to deal with what many in the first world have lost from their vocabulary: SIN. If it still hasn't hit you yet Sir, SIN is as old fashioned as old fashioned can get: it's only packaged differently. I'd rather get beat over the head by the Cross of Christ -anytime; and washed in his precious Blood - anytime; than stand with a pompous gaze through some tainted window in an effort to downplay the very reason why we have the old rugged Cross.

It's not cen-ral if it ain't cen-ral ... ; )
T
I entered both adolescence and adulthood in the 60’s. I knew the difference between right and wrong, and I knew what that difference looked like in real life. Even shades of gray were clearly defined. We didn’t have T.V. growing up in Denver, but when we made the weekly drive to Boulder to visit grandparents, we were allowed to watch certain programs like ‘The Andy Griffith Show’ and ‘Make Room for Daddy’. ‘Lassie’ and ‘Seahunt,’ were strictly forbidden - too much suspense - and ‘Leave it to Beaver’…well, I’m not sure what was wrong with that. I just knew my mother disapproved. Perhaps she saw it as television’s version of an ‘entry’ drug. I know she suspected – correctly it turns out – that T.V. itself was an entry drug to secular culture. But her fleshly weakness found the benign wit of Danny Thomas and Uncle Tonoose irresistible. And so began the downhill slide of a boy raised on industrial strength Adventism. Of course the Beatles and Elvis Presley were way off limits. But then so were Andy Williams and Perry Como.

Along came the ‘70’s, and the enlightenment dawned on Adventism. During the next three decades, “I’m not okay, and you’re even more not okay” was replaced with the Gospel of love, tolerance, and even acceptance. Adventist progressivism began to gently and constructively challenge not only the traditional interpretation of the Church’s sources of authority, but the authoritativeness of the sources themselves, prying the Church loose from its militant, paranoid sectarianism.

Over time, not only were guitars and drums welcomed to church platforms, but listening to rock music and going to the movies ceased being occasions for adding names to prayer lists. Despite progressive whining that the Church hasn’t moved far enough fast enough, the subculture of Adventism has “progressed” dramatically over the past 40-50 years.

But I have noticed something strange in the SDA progressive liberation movement. The sins of listening to Elvis and attending Beatles’ concerts have simply been replaced by the sins of listening to Rush Limbaugh, watching Glenn Beck, or being in favor of Proposition 8 (For non-Californians, this was the proposition passed by California voters to define marriage as between one man and one woman.).

So what gives? How did those who have led a movement that prides itself on having pushed the Church towards greater tolerance and diversity of opinion become so non-diverse, judgmental, and condemning? How did the Gospel of freedom, preached by progressives to release Adventism from the chains of traditional legalism, become a guilt-inducing weapon of choice for Christians whose politics leaned left? Having experienced considerable success in freeing Adventists from the bonds of their voluntary baptismal vows, progressives now seek to bind them by compulsory legal obligations and political sentiments to a new kind of righteousness by works – all in the name of Christ. The war against legalism, it turns out, really wasn’t about legalism per se. It was simply a battle to clear the way for a new political canon of Church authority.

I’d love to gain some insight and understanding from those who don’t see a double-standard here. Why is it okay to use scripture as foundational authority to compel legislative and regulatory implementation of Left wing public morality (can anyone say theocracy?), but not okay to use scripture as authority for implementation of the Church’s moral and religious beliefs? Is it unreasonable to use the word “neolegalist” to describe those who urge the Church to adopt political
agendas and beliefs on the authority of God’s Word?

Nathan,

I believe it is essential to separate the secular/political from the theological, as well as the terms applying to both, when discussing your premise.

The difference between "conservative and liberal/progressive" theological issues (not defined by SDA terms) is primarily related to one's view of scripture and inspiration.

In the secular realm, in the US, I would suggest "originally liberals and now conservatives" choose limited government as defined by the Constitution as did Jefferson and Madison...vs. the "progressives favoring more government presence and provisions now known as "liberal" contrary to the 18th century meaning with the associated view of the constitution as a "living document" to be interpreted at will apart from "original meanings."

In a way both in the secular and theological realm, "progressives" feel at liberty to change the foundational authorities as societies perceived "needs and understandings" change over time.

I suggest "moral issues" regarding secular application must also be seen in light of 18th and 19th century held morality acceptably enforced by the state regarding the "last 6 commandments."

If we don't keep our meanings and definitions to an understandable meaning you end up with yet another layer of confusion.

I can be a theological conservative and appear to be a "liberal SDA" regarding personal practices. A "conservative SDA" may practice all the oughts of SDA practices and in fact be a "theological liberal" who follows tradition and a less than orthodox view of scripture. This lack of clarity in what we are talking about and going from one realm to another simply adds another layer of smoke and confusion...in my view.

If I am grasping you properly, I have always felt that when the federal government provided in ways the church agreed with you would quickly see the "wall of separation" miraculously disappear...not realizing that is the ultimate modus operandi, I suggest, to a control that reduces choices ultimately religious one's.

regards,
pat

Wow.

My head is spinning -- from the spin.
I thought political conservatives were against victimhood and such. Apparently, it makes a comfortable cloak for keeping your views safe and warm.

Nate, you answered you own question -- re: the so-called "double standard."

It is perfectly reasonable to use all means (i.e., scripture or other moral sources) as the foundational authority to influence others to accept a public morality. The key words are "influence" and "public." It is both unacceptable and, in my opinion, unconstitutional to establish the scripture or Church as the authority to compel compliance to a church standard. The key words there are "establish," "authority" and "compel."

The difference is that in the former case, you are saying "Here are reasons why we should consider adopting this (fill-in-the-blank) public policy. Included in these reasons are these moral touch points, which you may or may not consider to be valid or compelling.

In the latter case you are saying, "Scripture and the Church (BTW, just which 'Church' were you referring to?) are authoritative in our society, we must enforce their agenda, through law." There is where theocracy lies.

No where, do I find anyone calling watching Beck or listening to Rush "sin." I'm sure you purposefully overstated your case to dramatize your point. Or, perhaps, you have simply deified them yourself, making political opposition to them sound like sin to you.

But I am happy to leave this to a public referendum: who is more likely to establish a theocracy in America -- Governor Perry or President Obama?

Really.

Pat Travis
1 week ago
Reply

Preston
Theocracy isn't going to be the issue, I suggest, as before with you. How the state views freedom of religion if it violates the states or church-state overtone alliance view...example Hitlers "German progressive church" and "state rule."

Really.

pat

Mark Bauer
1 week ago
Reply

Nate I do appreciate your thoughts and comments and it is obvious that you have spent some time thinking about your positions, but if you are saying that there is ANYTHING redeemable about the loud arrogant bigoted trash talk of Glenn Beck or Rush or any of the other loudmouthed idiots cramming our TV and radio waves these days, then I have to respectfully disagree. In fact I think that you can easily make a case that these idiots, who are only in it to fatten their own pockets btw, are responsible for a large part of the dysfunction that now paralyzes our political system of government. Regardless of their positions, some of which I can even agree with, the way they
demonize all who disagree with them and the way they foster "us vs them" is so opposite the way Christ dealt with His enemies that I don't know how any "Christian" can bring themself to admire, much less follow these folks. They have turned America ugly. And the comment above about Rick Perry turning the US into a Theocracy is not off base. He is an energized version of W Bush who can speak the English language better but is at least as dangerous to our health and well being as W was. Does that mean the left or democratic side of politics or the progressive side of the church has it all together? Of course not. But it is easy to see how we slipped into this current ugly morass that faces both the country and the church, and it starts with how we have decided to treat those who disagree with us as ugly worthless no good evil people. Instead of demonizing, we need some old style leadership like the kind that took place in a gentler age where opposing politicians and opposing leaders of faith actually got to know each other and spent time socially with each other. It is hard to hate when that standard is upheld.

**Preston Foster**

1 week ago  

Pat,

I know we (mostly Stephen and you) have been around the barn several turns on this, so there's no sense in going there again. The issue may indeed be the "church - state alliance," which, plausibly, can come from the right or the left. However, I was responding to Nate's concern about the possible formation of an American theocracy.

On that matter, I'll stick with my "bet."

Cheers!

**Pat Travis**

1 week ago  

Cheers to you Preston,

Sorry confused you primarily with Stephen on this issue.

I'll stick with this bet...whatever religious backing "forms" won't represent orthodox Protestant Christianity nor a "conservative reading of the constitution"...but a left/right compromise for the "good of the nation and world."

Cheers,

pat

**Stephen Foster**

1 week ago  

Perhaps it would help if you were to provide examples of what you mean by “Left wing public morality.” That is, what area(s) of “public morality” would be considered (by you) to be “Left wing”?
I would caution that labels can be hazardous to the cause of gaining “insight and understanding,” however; as you may discover.

Some of us view the efforts to undermine the historic doctrinal beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism, and the efforts to demonize those who would use Caesar’s tax receipts to help feed, clothe, and medically care for the poorest among us, and the efforts of religious people to gain control of the levers of civil power in America, to be part of the same religio-political movement; whether those involved with any one of these efforts realize it or not.

Finally, I would suggest that “industrial strength Adventism,” some of which I too have been exposed to in my youth (in varying degrees of potency), should never have been confused with Adventist doctrine or Christianity.

Elaine Nelson

Much of this Adventism that labels "conservative" and "liberal" are limited to the U.S. as political descriptions. Liberal or conservative would be entirely different in most of the middle eastern nations, and is different in Europe.

Most Adventists have little knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and how it should function. How many Christians believe that the Consitution declares that this is a "Christian nation"? The marriage of Christianity with U.S. patriotism is too well known to elaborate. Politicians are interrogated about their religious beliefs and most are eager to comply, regardless of how they practice or their plans if elected to office that are at cross purposes with the First Amendment. Wrapping themselves in the U.S. flag and Christianity, is almost expected of electable politicians.

Pat Travis

This is the compromised form I expect in any "church state" combine.

Grenz in "The millennial Maze", IVP., says it this way, “As the nineteenth century unfolded, church centered optimism was replaced by ay an optimism that focused on society. The dream for the truly reformed church was transformed into a blueprint for a new world order…when theological liberalism exchanged original sin for human perfectibility and replaced Christ as our substitute with Jesus as the model for the new human, the triumph of this-worldliness was complete and the way was open for the church to join the secularized millennial vision. The flowering of the utopian optimism of theological liberalism came with the social gospel movement. The salvation of souls gave way to the salvation of society.”

regards, pat

Kevin Riley

Having only recently gotten into the whole history of Christianity in the US, the connections between theology and social policy were a revelation to me. When our church started, most people in the US were perfectionists of one sort or another. There may have been arguments over the tools to use - religion, health, etc - but it seems no one seriously disagreed with the idea...
that perfection was both desirable and achievable. Coming from a culture where such optimism has always been looked upon as somewhat odd and naive, it helped me to understand our history as a church. The liberal/fundamentalist split was not about whether perfection was achievable, but over the best way to do so. While we have now moved to a cultural position where perfection is seen as an illusion, I am not convinced that religion - of any kind - is so far removed from culture that a common cause for a perceived necessary 'improvement' in society could not be formed rather quickly between church and secular authorities from any side of politics.

Preston Foster

Pat,

I think that's a pretty good bet.

Preston

Jim Miller

Where I attend church there is absolutely no legalism against listening to Rush or Glen. If anything, the legalism questions whether a "liberal" (anyone who is not an extreme conservative) can also be a Christian. I am blissfully unaware of Glen Beck's approach, but there is a HUGE problem with Rush Limbaugh for anyone who appreciates Biblical values. Rush is a gossip. He enjoys malice and he speaks for those who enjoy malice. He spends at least half of his time making fun of names and making other personal attacks unrelated to the issue at hand. He even makes fun of personal appearance. This is from someone who is both obese and on his fourth wife. He lives in a glass house, like most gossips, and gets away with throwing stones because other gossip-minded people are delighted with his material. There are sober-minded people who speak for conservative values. I just haven't seen them discussed here.

Jim

Elaine Nelson

"There are sober-minded people who speak for conservative values."

Names, please.

George Tichy

I would love to see an example...

Nathan Schilt

My point, folks, wasn't to get into a debate over which side is right in the political debates, but to inquire why those who have been accusing the Church of legalism and judgmentalism seem quite
comfortable with arguing that the causes supported by the Left - GLBT rights, universal health care, illegal immigration, wealth redistribution, etc., are Christian obligations. As an example, John McClarty, former editor of AToday, and certainly an adversary of legalism, stated in an editorial around the Spring of 2003, that no follower of Christ would support the Iraq war. I see the Adventist Left as being highly legalistic when it comes to Christian obligations vis a vis social and political agendas, so I'm just looking for a principled justification for selective legalism.

From what I have read of Preston and Stephen's opinions, I think they are actually quite consistent in the way they see the roles of Government and the Church. They favor an authoritarian, activist model in both spheres - one that knows the Truth, speaks the Truth, and promotes practices and beliefs that will encourage/coerce citizens and members to do the Truth. I am really questioning those who use the Bible to fight against righteousness by works in the Church, but use the same scriptures to promote righteousness by works when it comes to political issues.

Stephen Foster
1 week ago
C’mon Nathan, authoritarians?! The fact that we do NOT want those with overtly religious agendas controlling secular civil government, or that we might prefer “Caesar’s” tax burden to fall more on the upper income earners than on the middle income earners, or that we may also prefer that his tax revenues go toward workplace and product safety, and commercial fair play regulation, and/or to assist the poorer segments of our population, may qualify us as “leftists” in your view—but authoritarians?

Likewise those who believe that the world was created by God in six literal earth days, and that He ceased creative activities on this planet, in this solar system, on the seventh day and immediately set it apart as holy, and later commanded those who would claim Him to rest on that day in commemoration of His creative acts, and believe that He is returning to take those who claim Him (as Savior and Lord) to paradise with Him, may in fact be fundamentalists—but is that authoritarianism?

Labels are problematic. Thus I take issue with your characterization of my opinion; unless of course you are saying that actually believing that the Bible is authoritative, and believing EGW to have been prophetically gifted, is the very definition of authoritarianism.

Preston Foster
1 week ago
I guess Nathan missed, "Nailed to the Cross," an article dedicated to promoting freedom from the law and freedom in Christ -- the polar opposite of authoritarianism. But, then, the facts would interfere with a skewed generalization that simplifies the point of view of those who think differently.

Nate has a very good point which is that some on the left are becoming just like that which they have been fighting against. The problem with humans is that we have an us vs. them mindset (ingroup vs. outgroup). Those who were considered "progressive" in the church united as an
"ingroup" among themselves in challenging the traditionalism of the church.

Now however, that the "progressives" have gained some victories they are going further in their focus moving beyond religious ideological unity to political ideological unity. This is pushing political conservatives out of the "progressive" camp. It's easy to hear their replies posted quite numerous above here. They basically resort to attacking the merits, beliefs, and ideas of political conservatives, and become extremely judgmental I might add. Essentially progressives who attack fans of Beck & Limbaugh (regardless of whether these men are extreme) are doing the same thing they themselves hated: creating a rigid ideological standard.

One can speak against the abuses of political conservatives without attacking those who are themselves politically conservative. Acceptance and tolerance must extend both ways. Otherwise progressives will become just like their counterparts with the only difference being which issues they cut off "the other" from.

No Fool
1 week ago Reply

To be honest, I don't follow the argument. The term "legalism" doesn't appear to be properly applied to people who reject simplistic, reductionist interpretations of moral or political issues —arguing rather that these issues need to be addressed based on fundamental principles of fairness and reciprocity. In fact, this is virtually the opposite of legalism.

Further, the use of "righteousness" to describe a desired political outcome relies on a parallel between the religious and political spheres which simply isn't there. I know what Christian righteousness, salvation, and grace are; what political righteousness, salvation, and grace are, I haven't a clue.

Connie Severin
1 week ago Reply

Elaine - you want some sober-minded conservatives to discuss? How about Charles Krauthammer, Thomas Sowell, William F. Buckley, William Bennett, and many hundreds of others. Rush is an entertainer with humor that has a bit more Don Rickles to it than Uncle Milty. Glenn Beck is sort of beyond description (I personally think he's around the bend, but that's just me).

Nathan, I tend to agree with you that people who decried legalism back in the day seem to have the more restrictive approach today, wishing to regulate every aspect of people's lives (salt in restaurants, toys in Happy Meals, dust particles on farms) while rigidly enforcing political correctness in thought and speech.

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago Reply

I prefer Thomas Friedman, David Brooks, Fareed Zakira, Kathleen Parker, to name a few. William Buckley has been dead a few years so has no comment on current events. I never listen to Faux News and only on John Stewart or Stephen Colbert do I see the Faux News as only their irony can show. I read 5 daily newspapers, 4 weekly news magazines (Time, Newsweek, The Week, the
Economist), all very sober in news reporting. PBS nightly TV gives in-depth news rather than news bites. Only by reading and listening to a variety of news is one able to get a more complete analysis.

George Tichy

Elaine, Did any journalist ask you what do you read? It seems that you learned from Sarah Palin, and were very well prepared for the occasion....

Jim Miller

I might add Paul Krugman (did I get that right?) as a sober conservative. I might add on gossip that we all live in glass houses, that is one reason why we should not gossip. Gossip is corrosive to the person gossiping and to those who listen / read that gossip. It is not legalism to warn against gossip.

Elaine Nelson

Yes, I always read Krugman. His is the most sincere and cogent economic position, along with Warren Buffett. Too bad that no one seems to be listening to him.

Ron Corson

That is funny Elaine, as Krugman recently said we should manufacture a threat of alien invasion to help the economy. I guess the wars in Iraq, Afganastane and now Libia are enough. When I hear people praise the Political Progressive Krugman I sudder, and Jim Miller thinks Krugman is a sober conservative!

Stephen Foster

Hooray! Ron Corson and I finally agree on something…Paul Krugman is not a conservative.

Ron Corson

Afghanistan Libya. The stupid new Firefox does not work with the google toolbar and I lost my spell checker in these boxes. I am lost!

Kevin Riley

If you get "Add-on Campatibility Reporter" from the list of add-ons for Mozilla, it will allow you to use your google toolbar. I am thinking much kinder thoughts of Mozilla and google since I did so.
Ron Corson  
1 week ago  

thankx but it is not working at all either google toolbar spell check or the firefox spell check http://support.mozilla.com/en-US/kb/Using%20the%20spell%20checker  

I guess I will have to use ie till they get their act together. This is the first firefox update that really does not work well for me  

austudent  
1 week ago  

George Will and Peggy Noonan are pretty "sober conservatives" as well.  

Mark Bauer  
1 week ago  

Nate, just curious, in hindsight do you believe McClarty was wrong about the Iraq war? Was it a necessary thing for America to do? And if we had stood up against it more at the time would this country be better off now? It seems pretty clear to me that it was a total fiasco, both in human lives and in the financial cost which we will bear for generations. It just does not seem like the sort of thing Jesus would champion... just saying!  

Nathan Schilt  
5 days ago  

Thoughtful questions and comments, Mark. Of course I do not believe that political punditry of any sort is "redeemable". My question is why some Christians fight religious wars with righteous zeal on the political battlefield, but demand tolerance and love from the church on all nonpolitical religious issues. Why is it okay to make people feel morally judged and condemned by God for their political views, but not okay to make people feel judged and condemned by God for their personal moral behavior and religious views?  

In answer to your question about John McClarty, I think he was deeply wrong in his assertion that no follower Christ could support the Iraq war. He had similar views regarding the invasion of Afghanistan. In hindsight, I believe both wars were a bad idea, particularly in their execution, even though I was strongly supportive at the time. This is way off-topic, so I will resist the temptation to go into my reasons. Suffice it to say that toppling a loathsome dictator or regime in order to pave the way for political "self-determination" by religious fanatics, doesn't seem like a good reason to go to war or support revolution, a lesson I fear we will shortly have to learn from the harvest that was seeded by the Arab Spring.  

Elaine Nelson  
1 week ago  

Show me what a person reads and I can tell you his beliefs.  

Bill Cork  
1 week ago  

Oh, this progressive legalism extends further. Look at the recycling fundamentalists, and the Global warming fundamentalists, who look at the car you drive, the clothes you wear, the garbage you
throw out, etc., and judge you accordingly. Look at how they demand agreement on all sorts of issues—health care, homelessness, international policy, saying, "If you followed the real teachings of Jesus, you would adopt X or Y position." And on this webpage, and certain others, if you accept belief in Jesus, if you quote Scripture as authoritative, if you have any fondness for Ellen White, how do the denunciations fly! Someone mentions enjoying Steps to Christ and they start throwing Walter Rea at them. And they do tend to be of a certain generation. Is it any wonder why young people flock to GYC ...?

"Family Ties" has finally reached Adventism.

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**Connie Severin**

Elaine, I can't match you on number of extracurricular reading material, though my variety is perhaps a little broader. For the left I usually read most of Time Magazine (we subscribe) and Liberty. For the right I prefer National Review and the Spectator and read most of them. Discover and a couple of trade journals. I catch assorted articles and news from our local paper plus NY Times, and despite what you claim about them "Faux" News - it's more balanced than Stuart or Colbert. At any rate, I'm not here to brag about my reading material, and the liberals who imply conservatives aren't particularly intelligent do so at their own risk.

Back to the topic of Adventism and liberalism, the biggest problem I see is that liberalism is being generous with other people's money. It allows one to ignore the human problems around them, nigh even prohibits it if you present any religious aspect with your help. If "the government" takes care of those people, you don't have to. If the health department decrees you can't take food to the park for the homeless; hey, you're off the hook. But wait. You're a "good" person and you really want those homeless people taken care of. So you vote Democrat, and propose more and more "helpful" programs which cost twice as much as the church versions and don't feed the people with any of that unhelpful Christianity stuff.

I'll admit to exaggerating for effect in the above paragraph, but if it makes you just a little uncomfortable, could there be truth in it?

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**Elaine Nelson**

Sorry, if I were made uncomfortable by such trite statements rather than laughing, it might be a problem.

Stewart and Colbert are comedians, but they do satirize the news, which points up the idiocy of both sides, as they often do: they are equal "skewers" or pompous politicians and they have unlimited supply for scripts.

As far a "liberalism being geneous with othe people's money" which party got the U.S. involved in two of the longest wars in U.S. history, and the costliest? Who's money has paid for that?

I lived through the Great Depression, and am not anxious to experience another, but I know how to survive being extremely poor, so am in a much better position than those who only always had plenty. Living longer gives one a historical perspective that contemporary news can never match. History
recycles every 20 years or so.

George Tichy  1 week ago  Reply

And who was "generous" with the surplus left by Clinton, and delivered a government in deep "red" to the present administration? Let's not even start trying to find out who protects the middle class and who protects only the richest and care less about the middle class. (Well, it's all evident anyway, isn't it?...)

Ron Corson  6 days ago  Reply

It was not a surplus it was a projected surplus and it was very much related to the Republican takeover of the house and Senate. But today it should point out the danger of the 10 year projection. They are illusions and they are enforceable by no one. The one exception is baseline budgeting which includes a constant increase in the costs of the government so that every year it grows by 5-7 percent. Thus the recent budget cuts that supposedly cut 2 trillion dollars will end up in 10 years that we will be another 7 trillion indebted instead of the 9 trillion increase in debt just from the baseline budget increases. Of course if during the Clinton Administration we really had a surplus we could have spent it on paying off the debt. but as I said the surplus did not exist. Unless they have a balanced budget they is no hope to pay off any debt.

Elaine Nelson  5 days ago  Reply

Which president was in office when Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded in the longest war in U.S. history? When is there a projected "ending" for Afghanistan, and how much have both those wars indebted us? While the U.S. has policed the world, the other nations have cared for their own first, still remembering the awful costs in lives and money from two world wars which never involved fighting on U.S. soil.

The talk of our military "protecting our freedom" is a big lie. When and where was our freedom at stake since WW II? If the U.S. does not develop a less military stance to all the world's problems, we will soon be defense heavy and citizen poor. The U.S. is building infrastructure in Afghanistan and Iraq while there are similar needs here in the U.S. that cannot now be built because of lack of funding. The DOD is the most wasteful government organization with apparent unlimited funds. With all the private contractors who have been paid "no-bid contracts" no one has a good account of where and how those funds have been spent.

Pat Travis  1 week ago  Reply

Isn't it amazingly apparent why "socio-economic politics" has no place in the actual SS and worship services? I simply refuse to go there "at church" and attempt to stop it if within my ability past generalities.

No political or economic system performs holistically like the OT theocracy did. It was land based with sabbatical years. It had "private property" and "limited the kings/governments rights." We are working in the area of incomplete applications trying to make certain "justice" from the uncertain
conditions.

Many try to make the "planet in rebellion" the continuing hope for utopia.

What is extremely apparent today is that governments, Zombie Banks of all nations and many individuals are overleveraged. They all have been operating on false assumptions. Promises made that are unrealistic with no one with the integrity to demand financial accountability without either central banks inflating the currency to cover governments and financial institutions or demanding more taxes to attempt to accomplish the same.

regards,
pat

Nathan Schilt  6 days ago  Reply

Let me see if I can reframe the question without using conservative/liberal labels:
Some Adventists use the Bible, and even Ellen White, to establish moral obligations when it comes to extending the benefits of citizenship to non-citizens; economic policies that favor government confiscation and redistribution of private wealth and earnings; weakening of U.S. military power; and promoting social policies that undermine traditional family values.

These same Adventists have no compunctions about using their interpretation of the Bible, and even Ellen White, to judge and condemn Adventists such as me, who read the Bible differently. No one has ever made me feel more judged and condemned by God for my beliefs or behavior than I feel from those who urge that the Bible is an authoritative source of political values. Mind you, I understand how they get there. If your political positions are the result of divine revelation (Muslim theology), how can you negotiate with or ignore God's will? But if that is your position, how can you possibly condemn as judgmental the standards of a small Church which idiosyncratically uses Scripture to establish an authoritative fence around its subculture? You can certainly argue that the Church is wrong, but how can you condemn it for being judgmental?

Preston, if you haven't heard Adventists use the word sinful to describe the views of Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh, it's only because that adjective is too mild for those who vilify these pundits. You argue for a distinction between "church standards" and "public policy". It seems to me that this distinction begs the question. What makes a belief a "church standard", and why is it okay to use Scriptural authority to judge and condemn as evil the political beliefs of others, but not okay to be judgmental when it comes to church standards and beliefs? If the Church politically engages to oppose laws restricting commercial activity on Sunday, or to support laws penalizing/restricting smoking and alcohol use, would it be impermissibly using standards to shape public policy or permissibly using Biblical principles to oppose or support a public policy argument? No wonder your head is spinning!

Pat Travis  6 days ago  Reply

Nathan,
I think your "complaints" are most valid. Those of "political progressive views" do judge those that oppose ever bit as much as do the "religious right who are teapartiers."

Cindy Tutsch's recent article of WWJD is an obvious example. If I disagree with Cindy's "Jesus' view" where does that leave me? An obvious unbeliever?

While we banter about on this site, I feel the church organization should have a very limited role in politics and then only if a very "explicit" biblical argument exist for it's presence. This discussion exhibits the reason why it creates unnecessary conflict on non-specific public involvement in the political process.

regards,
pat

The article says: "I knew the difference between right and wrong, and I knew what that difference looked like in real life. Even shades of gray were clearly defined."

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If spiritual discernment was so sharp in those bygone days, then something was done right back then, more than what we see today. So what has changed? The Bible is still the same. The Church today is still in the clear majority fundamentally the same. The SOP inspired writings are the same. It seems that the world around us has drastically changed us rather than we changing the world (typical Israelite golden calf syndrome). Secular political and cultural agendas have consumed our 'old time religion' faith. To add to our woes, destructive theologians and academics have offered a spin-doctored fly by night opiate religion to the masses which has been engineered by political and cultural mandates seeking to gain turf in the church/state divide.

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Some say "we need a new coat for every man". Others say "we need a new man in every coat". What's wrong with the church saying "we need a new coat for every man AND a new man in every coat". I don't mind if my taxes are used for the poor, the sick and the needy - it's not just 'other peoples money' - it's mine too! ...Although I'm apolitical myself and don't even vote, I realise that we (the church) are part of a Political System which just cannot be avoided especially within a culture that heavily encroaches on our Christian Beliefs and Practices. A Total Onslaught if you please...

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Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

T
I think what has changed is that many SDAs have realised that what we saw as black and white in some cases was not. Many have come to realise that there is a section in the middle that is grey, and that finding where to draw the line is not easy. I believe that process was good for the church, but I also believe we lost confidence in some things that we shouldn't have lost confidence in. When I was a kid there were a number of people who said of the Bible and Ellen White (and often the church) "If it/she/we are wrong about even one thing, then it/she/we may as well be wrong about everything". An illogical thing to say in many ways, but I suspect many among us, having realised that we did indeed make an error or two, now are afraid that we may indeed not be entirely correct about anything.

Trevor Hammond

RE: "When I was a kid there were a number of people who said of the Bible and Ellen White (and often the church) "If it/she/we are wrong about even one thing, then it/she/we may as well be wrong about everything".

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Surely if this statement were true at least in terms of objectivity and suppose it did represent a large scale view among Adventists then a statement regarding this position would surely have been made in an official publication: unless of course it is of a purely subjective nature.

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T

Kevin Riley

I don't know that it was ever an official position, but it is certainly fairly well-known among long-term SDAs. I know it was never EGW's position, but the last person I heard say it also said "I don't care what Ellen White said, I believe she was infallible". Logic, or the lack thereof, does not stop something being widely held. There are many things held, often quite widely, among us that have never been the subject of official debate or any official pronouncement. Remember, we are only just, as of the last GC, looking at what ordination is. We have never been a church for spending a great amount of time debating anything that was not so urgent it was likely to destroy the church. I'd suggest you do a bit of research in the online GC archives if you want to know if the sentiment ever appeared in print.

Elaine Nelson

Waiting for the "official" pronouncement of the church to define church doctrines is an exercise in futility. Have you not read the 1919 Bible Conference transcripts? That would be a good place to begin.

Trevor Hammond

Here's Randall Herbert Balmer's take on the disastrous negative influence that politics has had on religion in America, taken from an article entitled 'Jesus is not a Republican':

- Indeed, the most effective and vigorous religious movements in American history have
identified with the downtrodden and have positioned themselves on the fringes of society rather than at the centers of power. The Methodists of the 19th century come to mind, as do the Mormons. In the 20th century, Pentecostalism, which initially appealed to the lower classes and made room for women and people of color, became perhaps the most significant religious movement of the century. The leaders of the religious right have led their sheep astray from the gospel of Jesus Christ to the false gospel of neoconservative ideology and into the maw of the Republican Party. And yet my regard for the flock and my respect for their integrity is undiminished. Ultimately it is they who must reclaim the gospel and rescue us from the distortions of the religious right. The Bible I read tells of freedom for captives and deliverance from oppression. It teaches that those who refuse to act with justice or who neglect the plight of those less fortunate have some explaining to do. But the Bible is also about good news. It promises redemption and forgiveness, a chance to start anew and, with divine help, to get it right. My evangelical theology assures me that no one, not even Karl Rove or James Dobson, lies beyond the reach of redemption, and that even a people led astray can find their way home.

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My point is that Christianity in the West, including Protestantism, is somehow been 'controlled' by the political 'big wigs' who use money, power and systems to their advantage thereby eroding the very tenets of our faith. (Please note that I'm not even talking Freemasonry which plays a major part in this and of their very real active participatory role these in all of this politicking). The 'progressive' faction within Adventism shows that our church has also been a casualty in this rat race.

Trevor Hammond 5 days ago Reply

oops...edit - Freemasonry

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Also, while you're at it, discussing the war in Iraq and the costs ($ and lives) involved and who's to blame, please tell me if they found the 'weapons of mass destruction' that Saddam was accused of hiding, or has that disappeared like the body of former US ally OBL who allegedly was killed for masterminding the 9/11 attacks.

T

Nathan Schilt 4 days ago Reply

Trevor - wasn't the message of Christ that "bigwigs" can't erode the foundations of our faith - that Hell itself cannot prevail against a life surrendered to God? Are the poor and downtrodden any more righteous or less greedy than the bigwigs? No, they are just powerless and, according to Jesus, better positioned to see God. What is it about the message of Christ that has led some Christians to believe that political vindication of our human desire for economic equality and "social justice" somehow paves the way for the Kingdom? (AND NO, I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT WE SHOULD THEREFORE BE COMPLACENT ABOUT INJUSTICE, CORRUPTION, AND OPPRESSION IN EARTHLY KINGDOMS) Why do I feel that those who insist God is not a Republican (an assertion which I wholeheartedly endorse) believe that He leans strongly Left in His political preferences?

Why do the same folks who condemn Glenn Beck and James Dobson en passant (Don't all bien
pensants agree on that issue?) as theocratic bogeymen never seem to mention the Reverend Jim Wallis, "faith adviser" to President Obama since Obama's falling out with his "spiritual mentor" of 20 years - the Reverend Jeremiah Wright? Wallis is unabashedly communist in his worldview (Of course this need not concern Adventists, because no Communist government has tried to implement Sunday laws or promote religious ecumenism), and was asked by Obama to help draft faith-based policy statements for Obama's presidential campaign. He proudly admits that he and Obama have been talking faith and politics for years. Doesn't anyone think that the foundational authority for his Circle of Protection and and Global Church sounds awfully theocratic? Apparently not. Irritated by the obvious Right wing hatemongering revealed in the question, the Inspector Renauls of Adventism assure us, "Nothing to see here; let's move on."

But seriously, why do personalities on the religious and political Left get a pass by those who condemn the religious right in the Church as judgmental, while virtually all figures on the SDA Right are Torquemadas, and most personalities on the political Right are vilified as harbingers of a theocratic Dark Ages?

Will someone please try to answer this question instead of illustrating the inconsistency I am exposing and challenging? Are you simply content to say God opposes the agenda of the Adventist Right, but He favors the agenda of the political Left? Legalistic, judgmental labels are wrong if God is not on your side; but they're fine if He is?
Foot Washing: an Irrelevant and Antiquated Ritual?

Submitted Aug 15, 2011
By Cindy Tutsch

Speaking hither and yon on behalf of the White Estate, I’ve noticed some trends in youth ministry. Indeed, some of these trends extend beyond youth ministry. One such new wrinkle in Adventism is to conduct Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, without the formerly requisite washing of each other’s feet.

So, what gives? Is foot washing before Communion optional for Adventists? Is it just an archaic, old-fashioned practice, inconvenient to old and young alike, and wholly irrelevant as a precursor to partaking in the symbols of Christ’s death? Or is the foot washing an essential and biblical practice?

Foot washing history in a nutshell: The night before Christ’s crucifixion He and His disciples celebrated the Passover in an upper chamber of a dwelling in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, Jesus was hoping to share words of warning and comfort about the events soon to transpire so that His friends would not be devastated by His imminent trial and untimely death. But the soon-to-be church leaders were embroiled in a serious power struggle and were in no frame of mind to listen to spiritual realities, even from the Savior.

The protocol at such an occasion was a servant should wash the feet of the guests. The disciples were well aware of this custom, and in fact, the pitcher, basin, and towel had already been laid out. Everyone knew that someone should do it, yet everyone pretended that nothing was amiss.

Everyone, that is, except Jesus.

In my mind’s eye, I see Jesus waiting to see what His friends, so close and dear to His heart, would do. When it became apparent that no one, not even John, was about to lift a finger, Jesus must have sighed. Taking off his long robe, He tucks the towel around His waist. In stunned silence, the disciples watch Jesus pour water in the basin, kneel in front of one of the disciples, and begin washing his feet.

As Jesus moved from disciple to disciple, I can imagine how utterly ashamed they must have felt. This was Jesus — Creator of the world, their Master, their Lord, their Redeemer, their God! Why was HE washing THEIR feet? In the palpable silence of the ‘aha’ moment, Christ’s example of servant leadership sweeps away their selfish ambitions, greed, political posturing and dissention. Only Judas is disgusted by what he perceives as a degrading and unessential act. Christ’s foot washing service is deemed unnecessary humiliation by Judas, and he is confirmed in his purpose to disown his Lord.

Lest believers in the future should consider themselves untempted by selfish ambitions, greed, political posturing and dissention and feel no need of a similar service of humility, Christ gave specific instruction about the perpetuity of the foot washing service.

“After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, ‘Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the
Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important that the one who sends them. You know these things — now do them! That is the path of blessing.” John 13:10-17 NLT

Pretty straight-forward injunction, it seems to me. But could it be that in our too-cool-for-school egotism, we want to do stuff ‘our way,’ with little regard to whether our choices are rooted in Scripture? Unfortunately, ‘our way’ may be just another evidence of a heart unwilling to give up works’ righteousness in exchange for accepting the righteousness of Christ alone. Because in disregarding Christ’s instructions, we are in reality rejecting Christ and His atoning sacrifice on our behalf.

Except Judas, the disciples had committed themselves to Jesus long before that fateful night in the upper room. Christ had accepted them as His, and they had been “washed in the great fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.” But even after choosing to serve Him, His disciples struggled with alienation, jealousy, and pride. The foot washing that night was not only a symbol of loving service to others, essential as that is. The disciples had ‘fallen away’ from their first love, and the foot washing also represented Christ’s willingness to restore them to relational community with Him, to wash away their sins by His cleansing grace. Their hearts must be cleansed before they could benefit spiritually from the symbols of His death.

Are we any less in need of Christ’s cleansing grace today? Or in our arrogance, do we feel no need of the symbol of Christ’s renewal before the Communion and thus trust in our own goodness, heedless of Jesus' instructions to wash each other’s feet in remembrance of how we are saved?

It was Jesus Himself who instituted the religious ritual of the foot washing. And Jesus says, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

Nathan Schilt

Cindy - While I agree that the ritual of foot washing offers for many a rich symbol of submission and surrender within a community of faith, I must confess to being bothered at your need to slip in, as scriptural, Ellen White's extra-Biblical embellishment of the story. The Bible does not tell us what Judas' reaction was. It only tells us of Peter's self-centered, prideful response. Grafting sectarian details into the story is unnecessary and speculative. Much more profound and Biblical is Peter's reaction, which you ignore.

I fear that for many in the SDA Church, foot washing is an occasion for judgmentalism - a prideful sign of orthodoxy: Sigh..."It's so sad that so many Adventists skip The Ordinance of Humility." It is a huge stretch, I think, to argue that Jesus intended to establish a ritual. He said, "Do as I have done to you," - not "Do this in remembrance of me." The place that the Ordinance of Humility had in the early Christian Church might help us to understand how early Christians interpreted Christ's words to do as He had done. Do you know what that was? Perhaps a historian of early Church history could enlighten us. In context, it appears that Jesus was providing a model of servanthood in the most difficult arena of life - those we live with, work with, and dine with. Once we start turning the master-servant tables upside down in real life, aren't reverse status symbols sort of meaningless?

The reality of service is so much more difficult and important than the ritual which it spawned. So why emphasize the ritual? Furthermore, when we look to establish rituals, why do we have to be
able to demonstrate a Biblical mandate in order to set apart portions of our lives and time as sacred places to remember and reinforce God's presence in our communal lives? If you didn't feel Jesus had actually commanded the ritual, would it have any less meaning for you? And why, if the symbol ceases to speak powerfully to our lives in a transformative way, do we make an idol of it?

Perhaps what you see in youth ministry, Cindy, is a reflection of the fact that young people don't see a relationship between symbol and reality in the lives of older generations of Adventists. Is it possible that God finds the ritual of washing self-bathed, already clean feet to be a stench in His nostrils? Perhaps not. At least not for the humble hearted who do it in love rather than out of obligation. But I suspect that a Church which believes those who do not participate in the Ordinance of Humility are omitting the ritual due to arrogance and self-centeredness will become a stench in His nostrils.

Bill Cork

Scriptural background is a little more complex than what is suggested. The synoptic Gospels say the last supper was a Passover, and say nothing about footwashing. John says it wasn't a passover (the lamb hadn't been sacrificed yet), and he says nothing about the institution of the Lord's Supper (only that they ate), but he does have footwashing. Paul, who reiterates the institution narrative similar to what we find in the synoptics, says nothing about footwashing, either as a practice of the churches to which he wrote or as a command of Christ.

Turning to John's gospel, where does John say it was before supper? Or that feet were dirty?

KJV: "And supper being ended ... He riseth from supper ..."
NIV: "The evening meal was in progress, ... so he got up from the meal..."
Amplified: "So [it was] during supper, ... [That] Jesus ... Got up from supper ..."
Young's Literal: "And supper being come ... Jesus doth rise from the supper ..."
ESV: "During supper ... Jesus ... rose from supper ..."

The majority of translators have it either during supper or, in the case of the KJV, after. In any event, they are already at the table. They are already reclining (if this was about dirt, they would have been washed before they reclined). Jesus gets up from the supper. There is an interruption. He surprises them by getting up after the meal has started.

So where do we get the idea that their feet were dirty? Or that servants were missing? Or that it was before they sat down? Or that it was a necessary part of the New Testament observance?

(All these, I think, are separate questions from whether we should do it--I will take Jesus' command to "do this" as seriously as I take his command to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of him.)

Foot washing is mentioned in 1 Tim 5:10, but as something widows did as a ministry of service: "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."

There is a scattered history of mentions in the early church (summarized here, with references http://www.yourbook.com/DisplayArea/IP27072-08.pdf).
Now, when I look at EGW's discussion of it, I find her contrast between the foot-washing and communion very interesting.

But the Communion service was not to be a season of sorrowing. This was not its purpose. As the Lord's disciples gather about His table, they are not to remember and lament their shortcomings. They are not to dwell upon their past religious experience, whether that experience has been elevating or depressing. They are not to recall the differences between them and their brethren. The preparatory service has embraced all this. The self-examination, the confession of sin, the reconciling of differences, has all been done. Now they come to meet with Christ. They are not to stand in the shadow of the cross, but in its saving light. They are to open the soul to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. With hearts cleansed by Christ's most precious blood, in full consciousness of His presence, although unseen, they are to hear His words, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." John 14:27.

The foot-washing service is about confession of sins and restoration to fellowship with Christ. It recalls baptism. The communion service, on the other hand, is about fellowship with Christ. It is a celebration of new life. It is an experience of his peace. It is a time of joy. How often, though, do we reverse this? How often is communion a kind of somber funeral service for Jesus? Of uncertainty?

A couple of historical observations: Ellen White had no problem with someone participating in communion who chose not to participate in footwashing (Ev 276). Early Adventists often had communion as a special service in the afternoon or evening (3SM 262; 2MR 116, 346; 3MR 290).

R.C.

Cindy wrote:
"Foot washing history in a nutshell...
Only Judas is disgusted by what he perceives as a degrading and unessential act. Christ’s foot washing service is deemed unnecessary humiliation by Judas, and he is confirmed in his purpose to disown his Lord."

Really, so where do we find that about Judas in the story? Is it somewhere in the Bible. Or is this simply another example of an Adventist that can't tell the difference between Ellen White and the Bible, after all as another blog on this site says Jesus told us not to eat cheese also. Maybe the question should be what is the nutshell? If someone cannot be honest to the Biblical story is there any real reason to take them seriously when they talk about the Christian religion which after all is based upon the Bible particularly the New Testament.

A sad and rather dramatic example of the the confusion in Adventism.

Elaine Nelson

Matthew has no mention of foot washing; Mark knows nothing about it; Luke never mentions it; John, alone, writes of this before the Last Supper. John adds much more than do the other three Gospels. Why should we depend on only text to be mandatory for Christians today? A practice that had great symbol in that time and has absolutely no possible symbol to our lives today.

We still eat, so the Last Supper has significance, but without any meaning, such practices are
Elaine Nelson

Foot washing is as antiquated as the custom of walking as the only means of transportation; it is as antiquated as the many feasts that Christ participated in as a good Jew. Humility is much better demonstrated in other words than in washing someone's feet in modern times when those same feet were probably leaving a shower only a few hours earlier. Not to mention the difficulty senior citizens have with such a ritual. Young people are quick to see through such meaningless rituals. They prefer active expressions such as helping people who need food or clothing, not their feet washed.

R.C.

For another perspective see my blog article http://cafesda.blogspot.com/2009/10/foot-washing-ritual-why-really.html

Glenn Hansen

"Now, having washed the disciples' feet, He said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." In these words Christ was not merely enjoining the practice of hospitality. More was meant than the washing of the feet of guests to remove the dust of travel. Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. It was to be observed by the disciples, that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service.

This ordinance is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed." DA 680

EGW says that Jesus made foot washing a "consecrated ordinance. It "is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service." The implication of her remarks is plain: One can not be spiritually prepared for communion without footwashing.

No footwashing=go straight to hell.

Bill Cork

>>>Young people are quick to see through such meaningless rituals.

Sure. Which is why at the Newman Center I worked at UCSB when we did footwashing with everyone on Maundy Thursday hundreds of students took part.
Ervin Taylor

Cindy asked if foot washing is an “archaic, old-fangled practice, inconvenient to old and young alike, and wholly irrelevant as a precursor to partaking in the symbols of Christ’s death?” That’s exactly what it is! I can’t think of any better way to put it.

We should all thank Cindy for bringing this topic up so we can develop a strategy so that foot washing can be retired to the same place that the custom of asking during Sabbath School how many “treatments” each member has given. (If you don’t know what I’m talking about, then you must be younger than 65 years old)

Glenn Hansen

Erv, I recall the missionary report at the beginning of Sabbath school. Questions about daily lesson study, pieces of literature given away [I blew the competition away on that one], Bible studies given, and so forth. What happened? How is something like that phased out of church practice? Can it be reinstated [luckily, I don't attend SDA church]? Seems like there were some questions about Dorcas participation as well.

I must admit, from an early stage, I thought the Sabbath School lessons were bogus. I figured that the number of pieces of literature I gave away made up for my neglect of the Sabbath school lesson.

An elderly [nonSDA] gentleman I worked for remarked that a retired SDA minister who visited him always made a check in a little book he carried to indicate that he had made a visit.

Bill Cork

So Erv and Elaine don't like footwashing ...

They get it in India. http://blogs.covchurch.org/newswire/2009/10/02/7332/


It proved controversial at Savannah State--students wanted to do it and the university claimed it was "hazing." The university was overruled. http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/Home/ADFContent?cid=4219

It was done by hundreds of Presbyterian youth at a youth conference. They found it relevant. http://www.kauffmanpost.com/2008/07/presbyterian-youth-experience-foot.html

It's done at lots, and lots of youth and young adult retreats in lots of denominations.

But Elaine and Erv think it irrelevant.

Elaine Nelson
Bill. those churches also have their worship services on Sunday, so it must follow that because "they do it" we should also follow their example? "Everybody's doing it, so we should, too"?

Ervin Taylor  
I obviously can't speak for Elaine, but I guess that means that I'm old fashioned. If "young people" like it, more power to them. Let ten thousand flowers bloom!

Thomas "Vastergotland"  
Footwashing can be relevant, but only so far as it is not turned into a tradition. An ordinance of humility would have an effect if the two participants take the opportunity to reconcile from a power struggle through the act. But if you wash your best friends feet "because that is what we always did", what would be the relevancy?

Bill Cork  
What's the relevancy of putting up a Christmas tree, or putting candles on a cake, or a bride wearing white. Traditions are traditions because they are things that we do, that have been done, that will be done. They are things that collectively we use to mark occasions, to tell stories. They are common frames of reference that remind us that there are things that last, that all does not have to be "relevant" in the secular media's way of thinking. Thank God for traditions that are not "relevant."

This reminds me of a poetry class I once had, in which the teacher was saying that lots of Christian symbols are not meaningful. Yet she found meaning in goddess temples on her home island of Malta. I wrote this poem for that class (which, ironically, she loved). I was Catholic at the time, and wrote in reference to a recent papal mass in New York.

Ozymandia of Malta

The bleached bones of the goddess temple  
Lie scattered over the treeless shore,  
And the solstice sun exposes  
Her once carefully concealed private parts  
To the curious gaze of a solitary modern pagan  
While academicians in airless offices  
Ponder broken figures and wonder:  
Was this god male or female?

While in the shadow of the glittering temples of Mammon  
Stands a makeshift altar in a place of play  
And a hopelessly outdated high priest  
Of an irrelevant faith  
Elevates a meaningless symbol  
And 300,000 youthful voices
Sing with renewed joy
Before the silenced, non-blinking eyes
Of the cameras of the world:
    Christ has died!
    Christ has risen!
    Christ will come again!

Glenn Hansen
1 week ago Reply

Bill,

I don't understand why you were rebaptized when you rejoined Adventism. Above you said you were "catholic at the time" you wrote the poem. Just when did you apostasize from Christ? Did you consider becoming a RC apostasy from Christ? Were you bowing to images, kissing the host, praying to Mary, and so forth?

Catholicism is a big tent. At least some of its adherents eschew many of the same things Adventists do. There are certainly Christians within its fellowship who need not be rebaptized to switch denominations.

An acquaintance of mine had been baptized in Adventism about 6 times, at last count. Seems that none of them really took hold. I was rebaptized once. In retrospect, I consider it a mistake, an act of violence against a sacred ritual. It was a useless exercise in my case as well. I'm as bad or worse than I was before being rebaptized.

It's my understanding, that the footwashing ritual was introduced to perform the function that rebaptism often does. Historically, people visited public baths and then got cleaned up by the footwashing, since their feet were dirtied by journeying.

Footwashing condemns the doctrine of sinless perfection. Had Christ expected people to remain sinless after baptism, footwashing would not have been introduced.

Bill Cork
1 week ago Reply

And when we are sinless, or no longer offending our brothers and sisters, then it will be irrelevant (I'm skipping all the rest, since it isn't relevant to this particular discussion <g>).

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago Reply

Foot washing is optional. That should please everyone. Has anyone else noticed that when "Communion Sabbath" is announced for the following week that attendance is much lower than normal? I wonder why. If this ritual has meaning for people, they are free to follow it; for those who find no meaning in it, we can reject it and without feeling guilty.

Bill Cork
1 week ago Reply
When Peter said, "I don't find meaning in it. I reject it and you can't make me feel guilty," Jesus said, "If I don't wash your feet, you have no part in me."

Pat Travis  1 week ago  Reply

The Lord's supper is to be celebrated "till He comes" in Remembrance of Him by believers.

Regarding foot washing, I suggest, if one finds meaning in community fine...it is not an obligation. Let each be convinced in one's own mind...being content with what is meaningful to others.

regards,
pat

Elaine Nelson  1 week ago  Reply

The Lord's Supper was to be remembered; the ritual of foot washing has no such recommendation.

Pat Travis  1 week ago  Reply

Elaine,

Neither are "potluck" dinners but they are meaningful to some for community but not an obligation. :)

There can be many "traditions" that can be useful to a local or larger community as long as they are not obligatory or create of themselves a way to stratify "more sincere" believers.

regards,
pat

Elaine Nelson  1 week ago  Reply

Many members do not care for potlucks, and as you say, they are not mandatory nor do other members make them feel "guilty" for not participating. Potlucks have not yet taken on a sacred obligatory ritual, which separates them from foot washing.

William Noel  1 week ago  Reply

Cindy,

My first reaction was like your's, that foot-washing was essential. But as I've thought about it I have come to realize that the topic gives us a classic example tradition to which we attach meaning and give the status of a divine command and an actual divine command. I did not realize this fully until I went back and read all the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper. Foot washing was a tradition whenever someone entered a home. Celebrating the Passover was something quite different
because it was one of the annual sabbaths reminding Jews of their heritage and the power of God displayed to their ancestors. But Jesus takes the occasion to point the attention of his disciples forward to his death.

There is no command in scripture to practice the foot washing. It is mentioned because Jesus took on the role of a servant when he was their leader. The "this do in remembrance of me" commands were limited to the sharing of the bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood that were about to be shed. Does this mean the foot-washing is not meaningful? Absolutely not! For me it is very significant because it is the tradition I was taught from earliest childhood and continue to practice. Still, I have to recognize that it was not part of the specific command Jesus gave to remember so it is not a binding command on us. The significance of the foot washing is what we give to it. We can limit it to the communion service. Or, we can understand that Jesus' action that night was an expression of his character and his willingness to serve others and see that as our model for how we should be willing to serve others in whatever opportunity we find.

Elaine, 

The "supper" is remembered by Paul for the NT church in 1 Cor.11:23-31 and as you say there seems to be no explicit instruction for the tradition of foot washing.

I would place it personally in the same context of Rom.14 concerning foods and days and how there is to be charity towards others non-obligatory non-explicit practices. If it is meaningful to a believer then practice it respecting your brother/sister's right to abstain from all things that may be meaningful to individuals.

BUT REMEMBER, that sword cuts both ways on our favorite NT non explicit meaningful tradition.

The beauty of RBF/JBF "alone" is that we are not judged by the expectations of others that have no explicit biblical teaching for the NT church. Thus Luther even said the celebration of Sunday was useful only for a common meeting day but not "obligatory" in itself. The practice had a useful community purpose for the weekly gathering together of the saints. I suggest he grasped the true meaning of Rom.14.

regards,
pat

If only the "foods and days" that Paul says that no one should be judged on, were adopted, they would be in opposition with Fundamental Beliefs of Adventism. But, I cannot agree with many of those FBs simply because Paul's comments have been ignored, but they have been formulated on the OT, not the NT.
Elaine,

That is another "dog fight" that hijacks this strand. My only intent was to suggest that explicits be separated from debatable as relates to the "foot washing" which in that day had a practical intent also of getting the dust off one's feet...and the humility of serving another in that capacity.

There are other ways to show humility...sometimes by not being over humble...or "forgiving" without proper process of the issues.

regards,
pat

Trevor Hammond

Wow! I marvel when I think of how the King of Glory would so willingly come to our reprobate world and die on the cross: notwithstanding the shame and suffering of such horrific callous torture and YET still do it for us (for me) with a heart full of love and forgiveness which demonstrates His amazing grace. I stand in awe at this: He pitched His tent among us. The Master became a servant.

The foot washing in the Upper Room reminds us just what His mission was about. It sets the tone of the great sacrifice at Calvary. Clearly this was a planned event, yet notably though, no servants are mentioned. Jesus uses every opportunity during these critical hours before his ordeal to still teach important lessons. The disciples seemed to have been ‘allergic’ to humility. Pride so far had ruled them and the arrogance of who was to be the greatest in the kingdom dominated the mood of this solemn moment. At a certain time, when there could be no excuses for any of the disciples not doing this lowly task of foot washing, Jesus the Master becomes the servant of his disciples: He washes ALL their feet.

What a privilege it is for men and women today to embrace such a relevant service of humility and be ever willing to serve those whom we are called to serve by God’s grace. Though symbolic, it teaches the same lesson. Who else but John the beloved would include this occurrence in his writings who notes and pauses at every perceived sign and wonder which the Son of God impressed upon his dear heart. He was their ‘brother’: one in service, in fellowship and love. [John 15:13] “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

In Service
T

Elaine Nelson

"Becoming a servant" might much better be expressed by driving the elderly widow to church; by assuring that she had sufficient food and fuel; that the fatherless child had some role modeling for a "father figure"; that the family out of work had help so as not to lose their house. These are much better and very practical ways to demonstrate humility rather than washing clean feet. Better to
paint a house that needs painting, or wash a car that need washing.

Cindy Tutsch 1 week ago Reply

Elaine, I totally agree that helping those who have the least in society is essential. Victims of injustice, or those who are grieving and alone, are often neglected. But perhaps this "should have been done and the other not left undone?"

R.C. 1 week ago Reply

Trevor wrote:
"What a privilege it is for men and women today to embrace such a relevant service of humility and be ever willing to serve those whom we are called to serve by God’s grace. Though symbolic, it teaches the same lesson"

Actually that is the thing when something is done as symbolic it no longer serves the same function. Jesus washed literally dirty feet, not symbolically dirty feet. Thus the humility is real. Look at it this way. There was recently a royal wedding in England the prince and his intended had lived together for about 2 years before the wedding. The bride wore white. Was the symbol of the white gown symbolic or actually significant of virginal purity? The tradition was fulfilled the meaning of the symbol was illusionary. That is what has happened with foot washing where symbol has overtaken substance.

Pat Travis 1 week ago Reply

Sometimes the "easy humility" is at church in front of others & seen by others. Good points of "silent service" Elaine.

pat

Bill Cork 1 week ago Reply

"Jesus washed literally dirty feet"

Not according to John. He washed feet during or after the meal, while people were reclining. Dirty feet got washed before you reclined (didn't want to get that dirt on the couches).

Jesus didn't say to do it?

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

William Noel 1 week ago Reply

Bill,
OK, you got me there. I missed that one.

R.C. 1 week ago Reply

Right Bill so they had their feet washed by someone, though there was no servants to do the washing and then later maybe an hour or two later Jesus did it again. I see you and Cindy must use the same logic coach.

R.C. 1 week ago Reply

Actually it appears we have no idea if there were servants from the accounts. But all three gospels say they were reclining at the table

Luke 22:14
14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. (NIV)

Mark 14:18
18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." (NIV)

Matt 26:20
20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. (NIV)

It seems really silly to make this a ritual when it is entirely ignored by 3 of the 4 accounts.

Glenn Hansen 1 week ago Reply

Last time I attended an SDA church, footwashing was optional. Those who find it meaningless can skip it. Communion is still available to them if they can wait a few minutes. Certain things are meaningless to people who have no faith or are dead spiritually. Baptist, for a lot of kids who grew up Adventist, is meaningless. The Bible is essentially meaningless to people who believe in evolution, for example. If a doctrine which permeates the Scripture is actually a fiction, then that book is more or less meaningless.

In the COC, Boston, nothing was meaningless. If you thought it was, bye bye. You would be shown the door, ostracized, shunned. If you weren't on "fire" find another denomination where you can be an infidel and enjoy the social. The Anglican church might be more suitable. You can enjoy homosexual clergy, AIDS ravaged deacons, beautiful architecture, nice music, and a solemnity which escapes Adventist churches.

Cultural Adventists would rather destroy Adventism than move along.

Ervin Taylor 1 week ago Reply

It would be very interesting for Mr. Hansen to attend our Sabbath class and express the opinions he did on the nature of "Cultural Adventists." I think he would receive quite a shock.
Pat Travis

Something for consideration. It seems to me that one of the arguments against JBF/RBF "alone" is that it destroys the necessity of so many "cultural teachings" that are not explicit in scripture. It makes waste of many of the Roman Churches beliefs as necessity by those who so opposed the Protestant doctrine.

It is interesting to see how far individuals will go to make "explicit for others" what they feel is important...rather than that being a clearly explicit duty.

While it may be a sincere seeking for duty, might it also be a sincere effort to justify ones own understanding as superior though in fact it may merely be implied or non-explicit for a particular situation and people.?

There is a place for judgement by the church...but only on the clearly explicit as far as obligation. Otherwise, let each be convinced in their own mind and blessings to those thing meaningful to you but not necessarily an obligation for others.

regards,
pat

Bill Cork

"Right Bill so they had their feet washed by someone, though there was no servants to do the washing and then later maybe an hour or two later Jesus did it again."

Where does John say anything about servants?

Ron Corson

I already covered that above Bill, try to keep up. But if you want another answer you will find the servants right next to the couches you mentioned.

Glenn Hansen

I wonder what per cent of the people who find footwashing an irrelevant, meaningless ritual think the same of the "blessed" sacrament. My guess is that most of them do but they don't complain because it doesn't involve having their feet touched by a stranger, which, incidentally, I find repulsive as well.

Elaine Nelson

It is interesting that in the OT, "feet" was a euphemism for genitals. Ruth went into Boaz' tent and uncovered his "feet."
Pat Travis

Elaine,

Correct or not that can only be done by a CNA in a legitimate setting for a legitimate reason...not church though it may increase attendance. :>)

Elaine Nelson

The term foot/feet is sometimes used to refer to the male genitals (for example, when the Old Testament refers to Saul going into a cave and uncovering his foot).

Whether it would increase or decrease church attendance, I don't believe anyone is willing to institute this practice ;-)

Trevor Hammond

I find it rather crass to mention the euphemism in the OT in the context of the last the Last Supper.

T

Trevor Hammond

I use the word symbolic in terms of the physical act of foot washing today where most would have already washed themselves at home before the service. The task of foot washing is symbolic in this sense (although we really do wash with water); but more importantly the humility expressed in this service is for the most part very real. Foot washing in most cases, in the secular sense, would be viewed as demeaning and disgusting. It is indeed a service of humility if not in practice by some but nonetheless an opportunity to LEARN true humility from the Master Himself. Pride and arrogance and show have no place in this. To wash another's feet and to have one's feet washed really is a humbling act of service and Jesus is the Perfect example of this.

In most Adventist Churches there are the elderly and those who are unable to participate for health reasons etc. - although some of them at heart feel eager to participate. (Bless their dear hearts).

Doing good Christian 'deeds' for others as mentioned in a post above is important but doesn't necessarily teach the same humility as seen in the foot washing service. I (and sometimes others too) fetch a Brother who uses a wheelchair and every Sabbath have to carry him out of his house by myself and put him in the car, then pack the wheelchair in the vehicle and take out the wheelchair at our destination and then assist getting him on it. There are thirteen stairs that I have to push him (and wheelchair) down and up again after church and repeat the drop off part. That ain't humility! That's just doing stuff for others out of love and courteousy. I sometimes wash the feet of the same Brother when he comes to the service in his wheelchair. That's different. During footwashing we sing; we pray for each other; we forgive one another; we hug each other; we SERVE each other. From the one's who are HIGH up on the socio-economic/affluent ladder to the those who are perceived the lesser of these we join together as ONE - in love, humility and
service. The Jesus Way! I'm so greatful and thankful to be a part of such a humble Seventh-day Adventist Church where Jesus is honoured wherever, whenever, however and for whatever reason - Praise the Lord!

In Service

T

PS - sometimes the wheel chair knocks against my car while I try and help the brother get on - I don't mind 'cos the Brother is more important... and that's the difference with foot washing - others are more important.

Bill Cork

What I would like to see is for those who have gripes about foot-washing to stop giving theological justification and get down to brass tacks. Use "I messages," as marriage therapists would say. "I feel ... when I wash someone's feet. I feel .... when someone washes my feet. This is why I do not like to participate in it."

Elaine Nelson

But Adventists always need a text to support a position they have adopted. Then, there are some who so firmly believe that a text is necessary for every occasion, will dump guilt on another who does not accept a "proof text" as sufficient support, especially since of the four gospels only one has chosen to add this story. Had it been of significant importance, why did only one even mention it? But that seems to be the SDA reasoning: one text is sufficient to form a doctrine.

Cindy Tutsch

I am not suggesting in this blog that those who are infirm and thus unable to participate in the foot washing should therefore not partake of the Lord's Supper. (My dad is 92 and still participates in the foot washing, but I realize he is pretty exceptional!) But most of us are not infirm. If we refuse to participate because it's inconvenient, or humiliating, or otherwise contrary to our natural inclinations, we lose a sacred blessing (and maybe more than a blessing--John 13:8; Matthew 10:38).

Some of my most precious foot washing experiences have been washing the feet of someone whom I had never met before --either because I was the "stranger in their midst," or because the person with whom I participated was a visitor. For me, the preparation of my heart to be able to receive the blessing has been an essential component. But I am still growing in my ability to comprehend the depth of what Jesus was teaching by example on that long-ago night.

Elaine Nelson

Receiving any blessing from a ritual is totally subjective: either the participants receive a blessing as they feel, and those who do not receive any blessing are also basing it on subjective feelings. A
"blessing" can only be determined by the participants. Otherwise, it is simply going through the motions based on habit.

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago Reply

Ok, I'll say it: "It's usually the haughty-nose-in-the-air-snobs who are 'allergic' to foot washing...

T

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago Reply

Mrs. Nelson asks:
"Had it been of significant importance, why did only one even mention it?"

Well that's what John was there for. He wrote of these occurrences which showed the significant signs and wonders of Jesus the Son of God - and let's face it, this was a significant occurrence!

T

Glenn Hansen 1 week ago Reply

Elaine's salacious remarks, in addition to being factually inaccurate, don't suit the context. Saul went into a cave to "cover" his feet, not "uncover." A similar expression is used in Judges. In both cases, defecation rather than urination suits the context.

The Hebrew word translated as "feet" in Ruth is translated in the LXX by a word that definitely refers to the feet, as normally understood. So her suggestion is ridiculous rather than informative.

Gailon Arthur Joy 1 week ago Reply

"Judgementalism", another code word for open dissidence and opposition to the fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs...and open rejection of the clear biblical instruction. It is "open rebellion" to reject clear biblical instructions and I am compelled to call for a serious assessment regarding your "standing" in the Brotherhood of Faith and if you simply deplore the biblical standard, again, there are loads of wonderful humanistic organizations that will be happy to embrace your beliefs.

The Lord's own example and counsel is clear here and is developed for very specific purpose in the plan of redemption. The abhorrence of this counsel and the wonderful insight provided by the Lord's contemporary light in the form of Sister Ellen G. White, clearly a spokesperson for the Godhead to this time in history, is a demonstration of the fruits of the spirit, and easily judged by the most elementary person of Faith.

Person's of Faith are compelled to implore the party in rebellion to “come together” that we may “study” and show ourselves “approved” before God, the final Judge of our rebellious spirits. And we must invoke this remedy in keeping with the Matthew 18 counsel and that every member
become at one with the Brotherhood of Faith.

The alternative is simple enough and if atonement is not feasible, one must be separated from that Brotherhood until they will submit to the Spirit and the Counsels.

I must end with a hearty “Hear, Hear” to the author of this Blog and call all back to the fundamentals of Faith, including the recognition that Sister Ellen G. White is “inspired counsel”.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter
Ervin Taylor

“[O]ne must be separated from that Brotherhood until they will submit to the Spirit and the Counsels.”

“Brotherhood?” Only males need to submit to the Spirit and the Counsels? Let’s overlook that for the moment.

I wonder if Mr. Joy would enlighten the rest of us how he proposes to carry out that “separation” process?

Elaine Nelson

Would Mr. Joy choose to be the leader of such an inquisition? Why not make up a list of the questions to ask all who wish to remain in the "Brotherhood"? Remembering, that no single member has any influence whatsoever outside his own congregation. All members are chosen or disfellowshiped ONLY by their local congregations. If the local congregation does not choose to impose a questionnaire, it is free to do so.

Vernon P. Wagner

I vaguely recall, that this function was referred to as the 'Ordinance of Humility.' As I complete my 73rd year on this planet, I've already gained enough humility to last three lifetimes. During almost 50 years of medical practice, I can vouch for having washed a lot more than just feet!

Ella M.

If one feels foot-washing or communion (it is not a sacrament as someone called it) meaningless, then they should not do it.

However, for me I find it to be, with communion, a profound spiritual experience and would not like to see it become history. I especially want to be at church on these occasions more than at an ordinary Sabbath service. They are special to me. Ideally one should read the biblical accounts to prepare for it and understand the symbolism and enjoy it as a spiritual discipline. What I do think is Adventist tradition is the timing (four times a year). It might be be more special once a year near Easter/Passover time and have that be a Sabbath set aside for celebration. Communion could be any time.

Mennonites also practice foot-washing as do some other Christians; some on special occasions as retreats. I think that's great.

Steve

Being a farmer and working in the dirt and walking in the dust at times I do realize how dirty the feet must have been in those days as they walked nearly everywhere. As the Bible points out they
must have had a special person (servant) to wash the feet to help them feel more relaxed as they sat down to a meal or recline as is sometimes mentioned. After a hard day's work it feels so good to clean up and relax especially in hot weather.

I see no problem with the church having foot washing. I can only speak for myself on this but I do think of Jesus and His walking everywhere and how dirty He must have become doing so and how good it felt to have His feet feel freshened up. He knew also that others would enjoy the clean feeling as well so He just did it Himself so all would feel better. Jesus was thinking of the comfort of others even when He knew He was facing a terrible night.

Bill Cork

Communion "is not a sacrament as someone called it."

Of course it is. It is understood by all Christians as such—including Ellen White.

Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. And the betrayer was privileged to unite with Christ in partaking of the sacrament. . . . To him had been offered the bread of life and the water of salvation. To him the Saviour’s lesson had been given. But Judas refused to be benefited.—Manuscript 106, 1903. {CTr 264.8}

Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. And the betrayer was privileged to unite with Christ in partaking of the sacrament. A long-suffering Saviour held out every inducement for the sinner to receive Him, to repent, and to be cleansed from the defilement of sin. This example is for us. When we suppose one to be in error and sin, we are not to divorce ourselves from him. By no careless separation are we to leave him a prey to temptation, or drive him upon Satan's battleground. This is not Christ's method. It was because the disciples were erring and faulty that He washed their feet, and all but one of the twelve were thus brought to repentance. {DA 655.4}

And the administration of the Sacrament was to keep before the disciples the infinite sacrifice made for each of them individually as a part of the great whole of fallen humanity. {DA 656.5}

But though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. He who was to betray His Lord was privileged to unite with Him in partaking of the sacrament. And today none who claim to be Christians should be excluded from this service, for who can read hearts? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat? {20MR 149.2}

Ella M.

Roman Catholicism, as I understand it, uses the term "sacrament" as something you do as a means to salvation, along with their baptisms, including infants. At least this is the way I heard a respected SDA theologian explain it. I suppose it means something different to each one who uses it—like so many religious terms. For example is our baptism a means of salvation? Some SDAs seem to indicate it is, but is there biblical rationale for this? I don't think so. Any way that's a different subject not to be discussed in this thread.

Kevin Riley
What is not agreed upon among Adventists is what exactly a sacrament is. We often say that Communion is 'merely a memorial', but then conduct it as if it really is a sacrament.

Bill Cork 1 week ago Reply

"We often say that Communion is 'merely a memorial', but then conduct it as if it really is a sacrament."

As if a "memorial" is something other than a "sacrament" ...? I don't follow. I'm not sure what you mean by "sacrament" the way you are using it.

Kevin Riley 1 week ago Reply

I understand 'sacrament' to mean an action that is both symbolic and effective - it does not just remind us, it changes us. A common understanding within Adventism is that communion and baptism don't actually 'do' anything, they are just to remind us of what has been done. I believe that in baptism what is symbolised is also realised. The same with communion - we don't just remember, we are also changed by and through our action. This was part of the dispute within the Reformation. We have tended to side with Zwingli, whereas I believe he is wrong on this.

Bill Cork 1 week ago Reply

OK. Just wanted to be clear. :-)

Brief summary for those not following ...

Zwingli went back to the Latin, sacramentum, and made it a kind of pledge or oath to God--something we do.

Luther stayed with Augustine, that a sacrament is a "visible word"--the word added to the sign, retaining all the effectiveness of the word, but embodied that we have something to grasp onto.

For the Reformed "Heidelberg Catechism," "The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross."

For Wesley, "an outward sign of inward grace, a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

Yes, many Adventists say that Zwingli was right. Yet Scripture speaks of both baptism and the Lord's Supper as "doing something." And so does Ellen White (good Methodist that she was). Desire of Ages shows she clearly was no Zwinglian--more of a Calvinist.

I remain more of a Lutheran, myself. Hier stehe Ich, Ich kann nicht anders. :-)

Kevin Riley

Luther, I think, comes too close to accepting the 'real presence' for me to be comfortable. I think I will go with Ellen White and my maternal grandmother's family tradition on this and follow Wesley. Any resemblance to Calvinism is purely coincidental :)

George Tichy

Look folks, in reading these comments, one thing remains clear: There are too many ADventists who cannot survive without EGW. They could not even know what is to be a Christian if they had "the Bible only." The Bible is incomplete and insufficient to those.

I am just amazed. It's what EGW said that counts, no matter what the Bible says, right? This is just insane! Why do people need to defend all that BS (Better Scriptures...) all the time? Some cannot write a post without resorting to some paragraph from the BS they have at home. Is this really the best use of the intelligence given to us humans by the Creator? I can't believe this! It's just too ridiculous!

Using and citing EGW is not what bugs me the most. It's the fact that those people keep saying also that they accept the Solla Scriptura principle. This is overt hypocrisy! They should admit once for all that they actually consider EGW's BS as part of the Bible, that the Bible is incomplete and ineffective without her "clarifications" - some of them, of course, .... copied from other sources of... inspiration! No wonder her visions often occurred late at night... That's when everyone else was sleeping and she was "seeing things" in the books of other authors... and plagiarizing. She was right, "I saw..." - she really did!!!

Elaine Nelson

George, on the thread of "Emergent Heresies" EGW is almost extensively used, despite there is no Scriptural justification for defining "Omega as heresy." John's Revelation defines the Lord God as both the Alpha and Omega, but the EGW devotees insist that EGW trumps the Bible with an entirely new and different definition.

George Tichy

Elaine,

All throughout my life I had the hope that ADventism would one day grow out of this insanity a little bit. Equating Her writings to the Bible (or even putting them on a higher pedestal as it happens most often) is certainly a cultic way of committing SACRILEGE.

It's sad that after all these years, it seems that there has been no progress at all. Especially now when the church is being pushed back to the past by ONE guy who campaigned for a long time to become the GC president (certainly inspired by the "Spirit", right?) and is making sure HE will control everything: LSU, ADRA, and whatever else is happening around the World.

Well, there is one thing he cannot touch: OUR FREEDOM TO THINK! (At least yours and
mine... Though some people will certainly surrender/sucumb to his "self given" so called "authority".

Yeap, it seems there is actually no hope... The "cult" will prevail! With all the BS (Better Scriptures)...

Vernon P. Wagner

Well said, George!

Bill Cork

All this negativity and hostility ... on a post reminding us that Jesus said the true sign of discipleship was whether we could shut up, kneel down, and wash one another's feet ....

Kevin Riley

It wouldn't hurt if we occasionally took notice of another sign - which he said was the main one - "by this will everyone know you are my disciples: if you love one another". Footwashing seem to me like one possible way of putting that into practice.

Ella M.

Although I do not like Tichey's angry outburst, I can understand a bit how he feels. I believe that EGW was inspired, but her works are overused in proving points. (I've done it myself.) She did not want this and spoke against it. We are to study the Word that she always upheld; it seems half of her work is Bible quotes. Many members treat every comment the poor woman made as biblical truth.

  I don't believe this was God's intention for her or anyone else. It wasn't the way she perceived it. Yet we have a group intent on doing this. Why? Maybe someone can tell me. I fear for the church if it continues. One side ends up rejecting it all like Tichy and the others cease to study the Word and will prove every doctrine and belief by what this Christian lady wrote. (I think plagiarism is a nonissue.) Yes, she gave important warnings, but so does the Bible.

  The Bible books may have been written long ago, but at least scholars have put it in modern English. That hasn't been done for EGW books which still uses 19th-century terminology as if its words were more valued than the Bible.

  In the end times we will be asked what the Bible says not EGW. In fact her overuse will be against us. Also the Bible indicates there will be many with the gift of prophecy in the last days—not just one. Why do we ignore that? That is a good question for the EGW Estate, and I say this respectfully, for I value their work and information.

George Tichy

Angery outburst? You certainly don't know me, at all! ...

Being very assertive and straightforward: yes.
Dealing with the issues in the open: yes.
EGW wrote many good things: yes.
Sola Scritura means the Bible only: yes.
The Bible is self-sufficient and needs no "additions": yes.
EGW's writings should be used to establish biblical doctrine: a no-no.
Plagiarizing and saying "I was shown" about it is dishonest and unacceptable: agree 100%.
Some biblical truths can be understood only utilizing EGW: absurdity.
Each person has the right to think and speak freely: an untouchable right of every human being.
The church (or GC President...) defines what we should believe: No
The list continues...

I don't see any "angry outburst" in taking these positions. But this is just me...

Vernon P. Wagner

George has spoken for many of us!

I only differ on Sola Scriptura. A serious review of how our present Scriptura came about offers considerable room for discussion. Christian leaders who held other writings as inspired were summarily eliminated by Rome. Does the Sermon on the Mount not echo the teachings of Buddha? HERESY...I'm surely headed for the Inquisition now!

Ella M.

Tichy
And I thought I was being kind! I gave you an excuse for words like "overt hypocrisy," the use of terms like "BS" whatever you want to call it. I think this sort of response requires some real study on just what inspiration means.
I am not aware that White was used to establish doctrine; neither was she a plagiarist in her era (or else Wesley and others were too). Following the same logic you should also find the Bible to be plagiarized.

Cindy Tutsch

Ella,
Actually, EGW is now in modern English. The entire conflict series has been modernized--the first four are now available at the ABC or online, and The Great Controversy, the last in the series, is at the publishers.

Additionally, there are the following adapted English EGW books for contemporary readers:

A Call to Stand Apart --a "footnoted to the original" paraphrase of EGW for young adults on the issues of salvation, wellness, careers, relationships, social justice, and the authority of Scripture.

Messiah--a paraphrase of Desire of Ages by Jerry Thomas

Blessings--a paraphrase by Jerry Thomas
Kevin Riley

It is strange that the only doctrine generally held by Protestants that you can't prove 'sola scriptura' is 'sola scriptura'. Perhaps if we all agreed the Wesleyan Quadrilateral is the way to go, we could all agree to stop arguing over Ellen White (who does an excellent impersonation of 'tradition') and Sola Scriptura. Just a suggestion :)

Trevor Hammond

Steve made this comment: "Jesus was thinking of the comfort of others even when He knew He was facing a terrible night."
-----
I like it...
That's our Jesus for you. He is such a wonderful example for us to follow.
T

Cindy Tutsch

Ella,

Continuing the modern English of EGW thread from above somewhere!:

The rationale for the White Estate's choice for adapting Ellen White into contemporary language is ably expressed by Bill Fagal in the May, 2011, edition of *Adventist World* in an article titled *Adapting the Writings of Ellen White*, and (hopefully ably expressed!) in my January 2010 article in AW titled *Making Ellen White's Writings Kid-Friendly*.

Ella M.

Thank you. This shows how behind times I am. The SC and DA were the only ones I was aware of. I will go back and look at that article as I seem to have missed it.

Elaine Nelson

Is there a need for kids to read Ellen, no matter how "kid-friendly" the attempt? Are there no other reading available for kids that will aid their faith and trust? To introduce her to kids, what is the reason, other than she is an SDA institution which is part of Adventism? Does "kid-friendly" avoid all the prohibitions that children innocently enjoy: bicycle riding; movies, and fiction, and eliminate all those "unpleasant" parts?
Kid-friendly EGW now that's a scary prop for those who are truly familiar with her writings!

Why would a parent feel the need to "introduce" Ellen in a "kid-friendly" way? Are there insufficient Christian books available that are far superior to 19th century ideas? How about a sample of how such "kid-friendly" stories have been re-written to appeal to children today.

Apparently, the EGW Estates need to bring in more revenue by "revising" editing, and making a long-dead writer applicable to the world today. A perfect "book-making" operation that will continue to infinity. Few dead writers have achieved as much.

Why would a non-believer in Ellen White's inspiration be so concerned about those who believe she was inspired and therefore value her writings been used for their children's education? Ellen White has clearly left a significant mark on our planet and why should children be denied the benefit of this. Is it perhaps that her influential writings will expose the shaky caricature of the progressive facade?

"Ellen White has clearly left a significant mark on our planet."

Where is she even known outside Adventism? To make such a remark there should be substantial evidence that the "planet" has been significantly impacted.

It was recently reported by Barna that EGW books are among those frequently read by Protestant ministers under the age of 40.

Kid-friendly EGW....LOL
This is an interesting and worthwhile discussion. I especially resonate with Kevin's and George's comments. A Spirit led faith community does not cling to its symbols like life rafts in the middle of the ocean. It does not need to sacralize 100+ year old reflections of a Godly woman, transforming a symbol of freedom by surrender into a yoke of institutional loyalty. I know, Cindy, that is not your intention. You want to remind us that this beautiful, traditional symbol of the Church is lamentably falling into disrepute.

I too find the Ordinance of Humility deeply moving. Whether Christ actually intended to start a ritual is highly doubtful to my way of thinking. But it doesn't matter. It is embedded in my identity as a Christian SDA, just as the symbolic significance of abstaining from alcohol transcends the logic and authority of those who gifted me with this lifestyle choice.

What I do not understand is why one would want to sully a symbol that many Adventists cherish by turning Christ's command to love by serving into a command to prove loyalty through a ritual. So what if many do not find foot washing meaningful. We will never persuade them by scolding, especially when Ellen White is used to slap us into line. Cindy, if you have to invoke the authority of Ellen White for your assertion that foot washing is not optional, then I conclude that it is optional. If there is no need to invoke her as an authority, why do so?

Had you merely given us a personal testimony of what the Ordinance of Humility has meant in your life, no one could have argued with you. But you obviously have a vested interest in making sure Ellen White's writings are seen, in the words of Fundamental Belief #18, as "a continuing and authoritative source of truth" - in other words, "as law". Even accepting, as I do, that Ellen White was a manifestation of the gift of prophecy, it is only through an almost fraudulent, institutionally self-serving overlay that one can Biblically see her as "a continuing source of authoritative truth."

As I have said many times, if the interpreter and expounder of a text is given authority to do anything which does not contravene the text, that person is not merely a "lesser light to lead to the greater light." That person is a super authority - or, in the case of Ellen White, a super prophet. She becomes, de facto, The Guide with a flashlight, leading us through labyrinthine, previously concealed passages of Scripture in ways that - Surprise, surprise! - reveal that the heroes of Scripture were all really pre-Adventists, with a distinctly Adventist worldview. Since some of what she teaches - e.g., The Cana Grape Juice Myth - requires a leap of faith or tortured "higher criticism", it is difficult to believe that the authority historically vested in her by the Church does not include an occasional trump card, in the unlikely event that Scripture alone seems to provide a shaky foundation for Adventist orthopraxy or doctrine.

Why can't we trust that the same Spirit which led Ellen White to see truth in her time will also lead us into truth for our time through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral that some have felicitously alluded to? Ellen White belongs on the top line of that quadrilateral - tradition - not the bottom, which is Scripture.

Vernon P. Wagner

"Felicitously?" I think not.

Few SDA's consider the Millerite, Wesleyan, and Baptist mix that made up the present Church.
'Made in the USA' religions were popping up everywhere in the 19th Century with each one declaring absolute 'truth.' IMHO, a step back for some serious objectivity would be helpful
for all such churches.

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<th>Cindy Tutsch</th>
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<td>Nathan</td>
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<td>Thank you for your comments and interaction on this subject. However, I don't remember mentioning Ellen White in this blog, much less citing her as the reason for which we participate in the foot washing ordinance. This is not to say that I don't consider EGW authoritative. I absolutely do—in the same way that I consider the prophet Nathan authoritative when as God's messenger he rebuked David. I do not, however, consider her to be AS authoritative as the Scripture. Lesser light, always—with even that lesser light being a reflection of the greater Son-light.</td>
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<th>Nathan Schilt</th>
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<td>You're absolutely right, Cindy. You did not directly mention her. But did you not incorporate her embellishments on John 13 in a manner suggesting that you view them as authoritative? I guess it was your hortatory framing of the issue (foot-washing is not optional) that invoked childhood feelings of having Ellen White quoted to me as a sort of cattle prod to herd me into the corral of orthopraxy.</td>
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In another context, I would love to explore with you how one can label prophetic embellishments and interpretations of sacred text as authoritative divine revelation to direct and guide the True church of God, and then retreat to the "lesser light" redoubt to avoid charges of sectarianism. It feels inconsistent to me. But I don't want to pull you off topic here more than I already have. Let's get back to foot washing. |

Remember when foot washing was not co-ed? The idea was to find a stranger - someone you might not have a natural affinity for - and ask if you could serve them. I remember being served as a boy by many men in the church who took it upon themselves to model humility and service, particularly since I grew up in a single mother home. Of course today, such interest would likely arouse suspicion and concern. How sad!

Today, at least in my church, we have different locations for families, for couples, for men, and for women. My wife and I serve each other. We share our spiritual goals and priorities for the next quarter, and then each of us kneels before the other and prays for the other. It is a beautiful opportunity for bonding our hearts to one another and to God in a ritual renewal of commitment to surrender and service. |

From the sublime to the ridiculous...When I was a member of the "infamous" Burbank Church with my friend, Erv Taylor, back in the early '70's, we took great delight in poking our finger in the eye of the local Conference by giving a sort of cubist treatment to Adventist icons and symbols. The Ordinance of Humility was one such occasion for creativity. On 13th Sabbath we brought shoe polish kits to church and polished each other's shoes. It was amusing to note that personal pride created a situation where the one Sabbath you could be confident that no one's shoes would actually need to be shined was 13th Sabbath. 

I should say in passing that I have never felt more accepted and embraced by any congregation than I did by the rebels at Burbank during my U.C.L.A. days.
Ron Corson

Isn't that amazing, Cindy's retelling the story incorporates Ellen Whites version, not the Bible version and yet she did not mention Ellen White. I suppose it is the way Adventists leadership is trained, use EGW and then deny you use her, that way they can still pretend to be sola Scriptura.

Ervin Taylor

I find Cindy's response to Nate interesting and, if I understand her correctly, quite helpful. She compared the authority of Ellen White in Adventism to the authority of Nathan the Prophet to the ancient Hebrews. She also indicated that she considers Ellen not to be as authoritative as the Scriptures. That would suggest to me that Cindy's view of the authority of Ellen in contemporary Adventism to be similar or identical to, for example, the authority of Martin Luther in the contemporary Lutheran faith community. I just wanted to check with Cindy to make sure I am correct in my understanding of her understanding of the authority of Ellen White within the contemporary Adventist Church.

Nathan Schilt

Fascinating point, Erv, which I missed. The prophet, Nathan, had a specific message to a specific person in a particular time and place. He was surely far less significant a figure in Judeo-Christian history than Martin Luther. The story of David and Bathsheba transcends the time period in which it occurred. But the prophet who infused the event with mythic significance seems to have had no lasting plenary authority over the cultural and theological development of Jewish history. If the Church could truly see Ellen White as a Nathan-like prophet for her time, wouldn't it do wonders for restoring the mythic place she deserves in Adventist history?

Cindy Tutsch

Erv,

Thank you for your respectful inquiry. I haven't quite figured out why people who live in different philosophical camps than I inhabit often feel the need to respond with sarcasm, put-downs, and edgy pejorative remarks.

Your comparison of the authority of Martin Luther with that of Ellen White doesn't work for me. Though Martin Luther was certainly God's servant and made enormous contributions to our Christian heritage, he was not a prophet. A prophet, according to Romans 12, I Cor. 12 and Ephesians 4, is a specific calling or gift that the Spirit grants. For me, the messages of a person who has received the prophetic calling carry more authority than the messages of one who is not called to the prophetic role. God communicates with true prophets through visions and dreams (Numbers 12:6) and the prophet then delivers those messages from the heart of God to our hearts (Revelation 1:1-2). Martin Luther didn't claim to have received visions and dreams from God to be
communicated to people in the sense that a prophet bears God's messages.

Ervin Taylor

Cindy:

I’m sure that all those of good will would agree with your observation concerning the negative aspects of “sarcasm, put-downs, and edgy pejorative remarks.” I personally plead guilty at times when responding to those for whom I have little or no intellectual respect. Not having a pastoral bone in my body, it’s one of my many failings, an aspect of my “dark side” if you wish.

I don’t want to belabor this but just let me say that I very much appreciate your comment that we, individually and collectively, “live in different philosophical camps.” I think I appreciate and understand why you can’t make work the analogy of Ellen White with Martin Luther. The theological implications of going with this would not be a happy one for traditional Adventism. But how about Nathan the Prophet and Ellen White?

Would you agree that the point here is the definition of a “true prophet” in the Biblical sense and how do you know when someone is? If you have a check list and the check list includes visions and dreams, then your prophet must have visions and dreams. (By the way, Luther did have visions and dreams about religious topics, but, for various reasons, he never used them as validation for his views. But obviously he lived in a very different time, place, and culture from EGW)

If one believes that a “true” Biblical prophet will be expressing universal truths and that the prophet for your particular faith tradition expresses universal truths, as you say “from the heart of God to our hearts,” then obviously the analogy with Luther or Nathan will not work.

If ones view is that the views and proclamations of even “true prophets” are limited to a specific set of issues and difficulties, then the Luther and Nathan comparison work very well. (Actually, Nathan works the best.) These prophets hold ideas which “work” for a particular time and place, but, which, as conditions change, become less and less relevant.

Incidentally, I have a real problem with the idea of messages “from the heart of God to our hearts” except as a lovely poetic or literary metaphor. May I suggest that no human, including a human who is also a prophetic figure, can do that. But, I guess I just don’t like metaphorical language.

Cindy Tutsch

Nathan,

At every major crisis of earth's history, God has sent a prophet with messages of warning, correction, and love. Consider Noah, announcing the wreakage of the then known world. Moses, exercising leadership and the prophetic gift to bring God's people from bondage to the Promised
Land, Jeremiah, announcing repeatedly that failure to reform would bring about the Babylonian Exile, John the Baptist, herald of the Messiah.

I believe God called Ellen White to prepare God's people (wherever they are found) for our deliverance from the bondage of Satan to the safety of Jesus' arms at His 2nd Coming. Since that event has not yet occurred, she is still relevant and her messages are not merely relics from the 19th century.

Nathan Schilt
2 days ago

I agree with your first sentence, Cindy, and I want to be respectful of your theology, but really - help me remember...Just what major crisis in earth's history would you say led God to raise up Ellen White? Okay, let's go with Papal ascendency. I don't agree that this was a major crisis of earth's history in the mid-19th Century. But it certainly was a historical narrative that found great traction in many Protestant circles, and was given an even more ominous face with the Adventist emphasis on the 7th day Sabbath. So let's agree, for purposes of discussion, that God sent Ellen White "at a major crisis of earth's history...with messages of warning, correction, and love."

What do you do about about the major crises of earth's history since Ellen White's death. Hasn't the power and influence of the Catholic Church on the stage of history waned considerably? Why didn't her prophetic gift foresee the terrible persecutions of all Christians and Jews, including Catholics, by anti-religious regimes of the 20th Century? Were those, and two world wars (not fomented by Great Controversy powers), which she failed to foresee, not major crises? And where in the Great Controversy metanarrative do we find militant Islam and militant secularism, the two most eager persecutors and oppressors of Christians today?

The earth has almost always been in major crisis, at least as seen from the perspective of living generations. And yes, God has always had prophets with messages of warning, correction, and love who tend, depending on their message and place in history, to be put up on a pedestal, a pyre, or, as in the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, before a firing squad. So why is it that Ellen White towers above them all in your mind? What is it about her messages that more clearly reveal truth for our time than say the messages of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther King, or even Flannery O'Connor?

Accepting your premise - "God sends prophets to address every major crisis in earth's history" - must you not conclude that either there haven't been any major crises in earth's history since Ellen White's death - a tough sell - or that we only tend to acknowledge the prophetic spirit as such when it can be captured by ecclesiastical tentacles and made subservient to the self-perceived destiny of religious institutions. I find the latter explanation more plausible.

Cindy Tutsch
1 day ago

Nathan,

The event of significance is the coming of Jesus! The crisis to God's people is a crisis of faith that precedes the coming of God. Adventists have historically held that the "time of the end" began in 1798. Thus, from that perspective, it should not be surprising that God would send a prophet to help His people sort out truth from error, and cling faithfully to His Word through the tumult of conflicting theological and philosophical teaching.
Interestingly, Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published about the same time as EGW's messages began to be published. From my perspective, it seems that every time God gifts humanity with something beautiful or helpful, Satan counterfeits that gift with something that appears beautiful or desireable but is ultimately destructive.

**Elaine Nelson**  
1 day ago  
Reply

That "Adventists have historically held that the 'time of the end' began in 1787" has no evidence in history: Adventists have written certain events in history to correlate with their beliefs: IOW, first the belief, then find an event in history that fits their prophetic theory. Just as they chose one of many dates for the decree to restore Jerusalem, to fit with 1844, such contrived date-setting is held only with this unsubstantiated position.

Date-setting is one of the signs of cults: The Mormons date their history from the discovery of the Gold Tablets, and are much older than Adventists because the first Mormons entered America soon after Christ. Of course there is no evidence for that; just as there is no evidence that anything occurred in heaven in 1844, but since neither can be disproved, they are safe! Choosing a date for an event in heaven (does Heaven operate on earth calendars) was not a concern of SDA pioneers, Edson had a vision, and visions must be reported and accepted.

**Elaine Nelson**  
2 days ago  
Reply

Cindy, you wrote:

"At every major crisis of earth's history, God has sent a prophet with messages of warning,"

Was the Inquisition an unimportant event in Christianity? Was the Holocaust insignificant? Were there none until the 19th century when Ellen was proclaimed a prophet? IOW, were there no prophets between the closing of the canon and EGW? Should all those centuries of Christianity be swept under the rug and the most important crises occurred when Ellen was able to address them?

**Ron Corson**  
3 days ago  
Reply

I always find this Adventist statement funny: "At every major crisis of earth's history, God has sent a prophet with messages of warning, correction, and love" So that means there has not been any Crisis in earth's history from the first century AD to the mid 1800's and non after 1915 have occurred either. Well at least not a crisis to the Adventist mind I guess, because after all if you look you find the Roman Catholic's had a good number of people they said were prophets though history, but you would think that if someone really believed that quoted above they would search out these prophets. But then again perhaps the statement is not really true at all but a gratitus statement, a fallacy. Yea that is what I would conclude but maybe Cindy will prove me wrong with her list of the prophets since the first century till Ellen White.
Elaine Nelson

If there have been no prophets since the NT canon closed, is it because there were no crises, or no need for prophets? The history of Christianity for all those 2,000 years has not been smooth, as anyone who has studied that subject knows full well. Whence came Protestantism?

This is such an Adventist centered statement that all the history of Christianity is being ignored, and Adventism is the only true religion to have emerged from where? The Babylonian harlot! That harlot kept Christianity alive throughout all that time simply so that her daughter, Adventism, could finally emerge as the one and only true religion! What a contrived view of history--evidently limited to the GC accounts.

Alle

Folks...she's just doin' her job.

Alle

W O W !! how ecumenical was that?  oops.

Ella M.

I watched Dwight Nelson's last sermon in a series on Ellen White and her critics. I have always felt the plagiarism accusation was irrelevent, and his lecture on this should put the topic to rest for anyone with a sense of fairness and logic. He said you can get the information at pmchurch.TV

He also gave a list of affirmations (we [the church] do and don't) and among them was the statement that the church does not base its doctrine on EGW as some on here have said. He also stated that critics don't seem to understand the different uses of "inspiration" and explained these. Much of inspiration, through the Spirit's leading, is based on research, arranging, use of words, and communicating as Solomon noted in Eccle. (see Eccle.12:9...).

He discussed White's purpose as directing readers to the Bible, and that her authority was not that of the Bible.

However, I regret that he did not discuss the overuse of White in everything from sermons to SDA magazines. I did not like that he referred to critics being on certain web sites in a pejorative manner. I think they need a place to discuss. The problem is that they rarely learn from it.

Elaine Nelson

All preachers have the bully pulpit and no one should believe such statements as containing ALL the truth. He is only one of hundreds, thousands, of pastors and since he is not God, it is irrelevant what he thinks. The Priesthood of All Believers refuses to bow to any human.

Ella M.

That is unfortunate. No one says it is ALL the truth, but certainly worth listening too. Would you say the same about a teacher? Or a scientist? Do you learn only from those you agree with?
Is AToday the 'bully pulpit' for Mrs Nelson and her ilk?
Just asking...
T

"Actually, EGW is now in modern English. The entire conflict series has been modernized--the first four are now available at the ABC or online, and The Great Controversy, the last in the series, is at the publishers."
I think that is really a capitulation to political correctness. If academy kids are taught Shakespeare, as I understand is often the case, why do we have to dumb down the works of EGW? It is pandering to modern laziness and I hope sales are negligible for this type of publication.

Then I suppose you don't care about the thousands of people you consider "dumb." What about the different versions of the Bible or the Bible in modern language? I haven't read any of these new EGW versions, but I find some the language of yesteryear to be trite and scolding, especially the phrases and words that have become cliches in church magazines and in conversation.

Suppose this scenario - hypothetically of course (Hollywood caps please - rating 'PG'):

"At a rebel shoe-polish-for-footwashing-sacrilege-flower-is-sin-power-stick-it-to-the-man-70's-kind-of-church there was a foot-washing service which ‘allowed’ blokes to wash the feet of some unknown hot babe (is that what they still call them – I must admit I’m out of touch in this regard). I can just see the rush for pole position by eager beavers: Why? Because they now would now find ‘a’ valid relevant reason to even worship the feet of such and the ground it rests on."

My point? It’s the motives of the heart that in many instances makes the difference as to what becomes relevant or irrelevant to us. Jesus by example taught its relevance and stressed the importance of humility, love and service. Foot-washing in practice reflects the principle of humble service that Jesus displayed without fanfare or fuss and following His noteworthy example is indeed an honour. It further exemplifies the Model of service which a converted transformed heart embraces. Foot-washing therefore, when done in the spirit of Christ as seen in the Upper Room is, in essence, an honorable privilege and very relevant to what and who we are as Christians. It stands diametrically opposed to a post modernist dog eat dog mindset which the First World has embraced: hook, line and stinker.

at ...the feet of Jesus!
T
"Is AToday the 'bully pulpit' for Mrs Nelson and her ilk?" Would the author of that sentence care to define and characterize who exactly the "ilk" might be and why are they an "ilk"?

Sure I'll do that for you Sir - It's 'ilk' as in 'birds of a feather flock together'. I hope this would suffice as a suitable definition of 'ilk'. Now in terms of characterizing it, you know the old saying: "If the cap fits you, wear it!" As for the why part, with all due respect Sir, you should know why: they gang up against the Traditionalists by claiming to be more enlightened based on their secular educational achievements and itchy wind of doctrine ears en route to ...Utopia?

The "ilk . . . gang up against the Tradionalists." Hmm. I notice that the first letter of "Traditionalists" is capitalized. I assume that means that they are an organized group. May I ask Mr. Hammond if that it correct--Is there an organized group of "Tradionalists"? Do they have a headquarters somewhere or a web site where I can find out what they believe?