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This Week at *Adventist Today* Online

**Commentary and News**

**GC Announces Distribution of *Great Controversy* Millions**

The election of Ted Wilson brought with it a determined dedication to circulate the writings of Ellen G. White more widely, internally and to the external, non-Adventist marketplace. Now, more than a year after his election, official plans to globally circulate tens of millions of copies of a re-titled "The Great Controversy" have been announced….

**Acts of the Apostles 100th Anniversary Celebrated**

An estimated 5,000 Seventh-day Adventists from across the Midwest gathered near Wilmington, Ohio, Sabbath, October 22, to celebrate two historic milestones—the 100th anniversary of the publication of the book *Acts of the Apostles* by Ellen White and the 150th anniversary of the formation of the Ohio Conference…

**Our Catholic Friends Have a Right Wing Too**
Much is written about "conservative" and "liberal" Adventism, and the permutations among the two. By no means is this unique to our faith, says blogger Ervin Taylor. If anything, Roman Catholicism is even more stringent in its pluralistic divide between those who look to the past for inspiration, and those who would rather leave much of that past behind...

**The Blending of American Catholicism and Protestantism**

Blogger Herbert Douglass sees America, now with a majority of its Supreme Court justices professing members of the Catholic faith, poised to create a politically unified consortium of Catholics and Protestants. But first, he says, they must waive their doctrinal differences and agree to jointly promote those beliefs they hold in common...

**Back to the Good Old Days**

The nostalgic drive to return four generations to the image of Adventism's halcyon days appeals to many. Blogger Lawrence Downing warns, however, of the pitfalls of overstating the positives of those yore-begotten times. They may appear to have been the best of times, but were they also some of our worst?...

**The Pesher of Paul**

Blogger Ron Corson writes that we must better understanding the methods used in the New Testament to apply Old Testament passages to that era. "Peschers" represent such commentaries, and to shoehorn these comments as literally applicable to universal questions they do not address is to strain their meaning far beyond what Paul and other writers intended.

**Shift the Way You Think**

Adventists have a proud heritage of a priori acceptance of biblical authority; we have hammered out our doctrines a posteriori, demanding that they be in accord with the Bible. Now that increasing evidence questions the Bible's authority on significant scientific matters, are we prepared to re-examine our assumptions about its scientific immutability? Blogger Chris Barrett says we should do so.
General Conference President Announces Plans to Distribute the 'Great Controversy'

Submitted Oct 26, 2011
By Atoday News Team

General Conference President Announces Plans to Distribute 162 Million Copies of Great Controversy

A goal that Ted N. C. Wilson, the world president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has repeatedly promoted is the wide distribution of Ellen White’s book, The Great Controversy. It is a review of Christian history and extends into a description of the return of Christ and end time events.

Wilson has announced that plans are in place to circulate at least 162 million copies of the book next year. A total of 70 million of these will be in Latin America where the majority of the population is at least nominally Catholic. The book includes a critique of the Roman Catholic Church.

Most of the copies that will be distributed under this plan are actually condensed versions of the nearly 700-page volume. For example, Project Steps to Christ, an ASI-member organization, publishes an abridgement which they will distribute through direct mail at 65 cents per household. Any organization or individual can pay for delivery in communities they select.

This version is 112 pages in a small paperback format and carries a new title, On The Edge of Time. The main thing the abridgers did to shorten this beloved, but hefty, book was simply to leave out the first two-thirds, which deals with the history of the early reformers, the Protestant Reformation, and the early Adventist movement in Europe and America, the story of William Miller and others. Chapter 29 in the original volume, “The Origin of Evil,” is chapter 1 in this version.

These 13 chapters included in the abridged version are condensed. Some of the material that has been removed includes quotations from early Catholic journals saying that Protestants ought to keep the Sabbath if they are really against Catholicism, much of the discussion of detailed prophecy charts, most of the description of the papacy and its policies, material on the sanctuary and its relevance to our time, as well as considerable repetition and some illustrative stories, both biblical and non-biblical.

The main principles of “the conflict of the ages” are still there. The material that is retained is not changed, but is word-for-word the originally-published Ellen White material.

The other major change is some reordering of the chapters. After shortened versions of the original chapters 29, 31, 33, and 34, this version jumps back in the time line and inserts some of chapters 17, 25, and 27, including Jesus’ promise to return and the signs of His second coming. It leaves out the Lisbon earthquake as fulfillment of prophecy. There is a presentation of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, the Sabbath, some review of prophecy time lines, a discussion of 1798, and the “lamb-like beast” of Revelation 13.

This version then goes back to Chapter 36 from the original and follows the full version, abridging it some, but retaining the main message. It greatly reduces the description of the time of trouble, people worrying about “one sin not repented,” the appearance of the ark in heaven just before Jesus comes, the detailed reunion of Adam with Christ, and other more features from the original that have raised arguments. The famous and lyrical ending is intact.
It introduces people to the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the great battle between good and evil, and how it will end. Yet, it is not precise about every small detail in the traditional telling of this narrative. The emphasis is on how the reader can align with God’s side in their daily lives and look forward to Christ’s promised return.

Ron Corson 1 week ago

So it sounds like the chapter 28 "facing lifes Record" or as titled in the orginal, "The investigative Judgement" is not part of this new widely distributed version. That is interesting, perhaps even the GC is learning that such a view is unworkable.

Horace Butler 1 week ago

Actually, the IJ is the only view that makes sense of the passages in Daniel that talk about judgment. The parallels in each of the prophetic visions are so clear that a child can understand it. As usual, it is theologians who have the most difficulty accepting what is really quite simple.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago

If John 5:22 and Romans 8:1 mean anything, it’s that the IJ is what is referred to as “transparent” to those who love, trust, and are in Christ.

In other words, practically speaking, it does not apply to those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

With Christ as our Advocate and Judge, we are in a “no lose” situation.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Why edit, subtract and add, to a book? Why can't someone write a condensed version of SDA beliefs on the end times without continuing to re-write EGW? To cannibalize another writer is as wrong as she was in taking other writers' thoughts and making them her own. Is there no other original writer in all of Adventism who cannot improve her writing and give the same message?

George Tichy 6 days ago

Elaine, just wait until "the competition" learns that the book that attacks them has been edited!!! I can't believe that the GC is manipulating this issue by "editing" the book. Do they have the author's authoprization to do that? Can they just edit it as they please?
This is not only ridiculous. It's outrageous!

And what message does it send to those adventists who were reading the "old version" so far? Does it mean that the church is actually recognizing some of those (now deleted) issues as being
actually not legit??? And if they are legit, why to "edit" them.

Can anyone, please, explain this "irrationale" ...

Horace Butler 1 week ago

Don't go down the "EGW is a plagiarist" road again, Elaine. That's been debunked many times and has no credibility. She was no more a plagiarist than were many of the Biblical writers.

And how can one improve on something that was inspired by the Holy Spirit? I don't see how one could improve on Desire of Ages, to cite one example. The recent pitiful attempt (Messiah, I believe it is called) to "improve" on her writings was a dismal failure, in my opinion.

George Tichy 6 days ago

Debunked? How can that overt plagiarism be ever "debunked"??
Don't go down the road of insisting to convince people about this absurdity utilizing the "repeat until they get tired of it." The facts about EGW's plagiarism can't be "debunked" because it's all well documented in the books of.... EGW!!

exorcising Ellen 1 week ago

@ Horace. Exactly where and when were her plagiarizing myths debunked? Because in all sincerity, I would like to know. I have you read the 1919 GC notes, Walter Rea, D.M.Canright, & DaleRatzliff's books, and am pretty convinced otherwise. Are you trying to make nothing out of something big? Of course if I'm wrong, please inform me, because I'm exorcising Ellen.

Horace Butler 1 week ago

Those 3 authors you mentioned are all disgruntled former Adventists. I would expect such nonsense from them. Of course she borrowed from other sources. She herself admits that she did, and gave the reasons why. The way she wrote was in harmony with the accepted practices of her time. Whenever we try to impose current standards on people long dead, we can always find reasons to condemn them. If current standards were applied to Moses, he would never have been allowed to lead the Israelites. After all, he was a murderer. A murderer, even if he repents, isn't fit to lead--according to current standards.

And then there is the issue of context. Those who hate the SOP can always find ways of making her statements mean something contrary to their original intent. To be blunt, I don't believe that Ellen White denied borrowing from others in the way it is portrayed by Mr. Taylor. This issue will never be resolved. Those who recognize that the woman was obviously inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the things she did, will continue to be blessed by her writings. Those who hate her because she condemns their pet sins and teaches "embarrassing" truths, which are out of harmony with the lies of Babylon will continue to find fault with her. Time will tell who is right.
This is an insult to everyone's intelligence. At least to those who have proper knowledge of the facts, and of those who are not engaged in any crusade to "salvage Ellen".

Please stop deceiving those who may not have all the knowledge of the facts about EGW's plagiarism. This is intellectually dishonest. Enough of this nonsense about saying that her critics were "debunked!" It's not true, it's just the opposite of the truth!

Ella M. 5 days ago

Why not read what is said instead of attacking the messenger? Distracting from the devotional and spiritual content is dishonest. This is what certain mindsets do with the Bible. It can be an escape from the reality and truth of the words, but that is not my place to judge. It is between the individual and God it they believe in one. Unless one can show me that the words are not true in a spiritual sense, then I have no time for this sort of attack.

I am sure you have heard all the logic of both the Bible and church writings and see no need to go over this again and again. I do have a problem with your verbage that is insulting to those who find inspiration in these writings. Why would one do that?

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago

"Shooting the messenger" is oldest trick of refutation and does nothing to change the message. If someone said "your house is on fire" would you curse the messenger and send him away?

Ad hominem attacks "to quoque" (look it up) is empty and shows no evidence of careful thought.

Vernon P. Wagner 6 days ago

"Disgruntled former Adventists"....now, there's a term from my distant childhood. A perjorative phrase to excuse all manner of contention. Other time-worn dismissive terms include: outsiders, unbelievers, back sliders, apostates, etc.. When believers differ, and conclude that God might not be a card-carrying SDA, they may not be 'disgruntled' in the least...merely enlightened.

Ella M. 5 days ago

" When believers differ, and conclude that God might not be a card-carrying SDA, they may not be 'disgruntled' in the least...merely enlightened."

I can agree with this statement, but if one is truly a believer they will not insult the beliefs of those who find inspiration in church writings. I am not opposed to those who have questions on EGW but I find it unChristian to use extreme terms concerning those who do. If this isn't disgruntled, I don't know what else to call it. Do you have a suggestion that is not offensive? By the way, my family were once "backsliders" and I agree with the term.

Vernon P. Wagner 4 days ago

I know I'm in danger of the Inquisition for using the word 'enlightened' for those whose
sincere beliefs evolve along lines that differ from organized religion of any kind. Ron Numbers, author of 'The White Lie,' was my classmate at Collegedale (Class of '61). The man is a genius, and not even slightly 'disgruntled.'

Virtually all of western Christianity follows the Roman model. All who differed with Papacy approved Augustinian views were eliminated long ago. Protestantism has retained the vestiges thereof until the present day.

I know a lifelong SDA minister who was 'de-frocked' for siding with Robert Brinsmead. He remains just as spiritually 'connected' as ever, but wants nothing to do with the SDA Church who treated him thus. None of those non-Christian derogatory slurs are appropriate for this dear friend. Any religious body who uses them is not on the same page as Yeshua.

I now expect the furnace to be made seven times hotter for me, but I'll be in good company!

Vernon P. Wagner 4 days ago

I forgot to mention my own parents were also disfellowshipped for befriending Mr. Brinsmead...as I recall, he'd stayed at their house on occasion. Until the day she died, my mom regretted the years she'd spent as a member of a Church that didn't allow members to think 'outside the box'...similar to past Vatican behavior. I have no idea what terms of disgust the 'Faithful' must have hurled against my parents. Nevertheless, they rejoiced in their newfound spiritual freedom.

Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

Vernon, Walter Rea was the author of the "White Lie." Ron Numbers wrote "The Prophetess of Health" and other books on this subject.

They exposed the very soft underbelly of Adventism and lost many members, of which I was also one.

Vernon P. Wagner 3 days ago

Oooops...you're correct. Memory is mush these days...been a long time since I read them. My membership waned long before either book was published. I crossed the color line in dating in 1960 at an SDA college. Both of us were victimized by racist letters to our parents with copies secretly slid under our doors in the dormitory. A former missionary arranged our expulsion, but we were allowed to stay after promising NOT to return the following year. His advice to me: "God loves them, but you should not."

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Horace, while for you she may be "debunked" it indicates that you disregard completely the abundance of evidence proving otherwise. There will always be true believers who can never
accept that their icon is crumbling or that she was human. Only by ignoring the voluminous evidence, including the G.C. paid investigator, Fred Veltman, who for five years investigated ONLY the Desire of Ages and wrote that his findings questioned her honesty. It was never published, and one can only estimate why.

Ervin Taylor 1 week ago

I'm surprised that anyone in 2011 can, with a straight face, deny that EGW did not plagiarize a lot of material. Everyone, even our GC friends, agree that she "borrowed" material without any attribution. The interesting statement is that "she was no more a plagiarist than were many of the Bible writers." Absolutely true, but I am not aware of any Bible writer who was asked, "Did you copy from others your material?" and answered, "No, I did not!". The major problem is not that she "borrowed." Many Bible writers did that. The big problem is that she denied borrowing. But this does not make her a bad person. It just means that she was a human being. She did not want that fact to be widely known among converts for fear of what it would do to her influence on the church. A very human and reasonable concern. But to say she did not plagiarize is just silly.

Ella M. 5 days ago

I would say you have an element of truth here in her reasons for denial. I don't remember what she said, but I am sure you are right. She was human and borrowed from the beginning by using material from other sources and saying so in written articles and SS materials that appeared in the church papers. But I believe in inspiration in most written material, even that borrowed. This seems logical and not a crime. Even in conversation we echo the ideas of others, I certainly do--there is nothing new under the sun.

Ned 1 week ago

Ervin,

In the Introduction to The Great Controversy (of which I know you would be aware) Ellen White is so open and clear about her use of the material of others and why that it is hard not to wonder about the time you refer to when she said she did not copy. What the occasion was, what exactly the question and her response was referring to. Something very specific? I would need to know much more about the incident for it to supersede her declaration so widely available in GC. Her use (as explained in the introduction there) does not "steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own," ordinarily an aspect of plagiarism. True, she did not credit the sources, which certainly would not be acceptable today and perhaps was very unwise in her day too. Even so, it does not seem deserving of the extreme criticism directed at her for it today.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

"I would need to know much more about the incident for it to supersede her declaration so widely available in GC."

It is widely available if one is truly interested. Several of the sources are mentioned above. Many of her books were updated and proper credit was given, but in their original state not shown. The problem: she said that everything she wrote came straight from God. Do yourself a
favor and read the many articles and books before casting stones at those who mention plagiarism, it does no credit to one's statements to speak about a subject when he has little knowledge of the subject. Particularly, read the 1919 Bible conference which is available on the internet.

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

I fully support the sentiments expressed by Ned's post above in which he tries to reason with her vehement detractors. I also fully support the Stephen Foster and Horace Butler comments regarding the validity of the IJ which is undoubtedly based on the Bible. Ellen White was never convicted in a court of law for what she has been maliciously accused of here, yet again. Here is a quote from a formal investigation into this:

- Roman Catholic attorney Vincent Ramik: "Based upon our review of the facts and legal precedents . . . Ellen White was not a plagiarist and her works did not constitute copyright infringement/piracy." "It is impossible to imagine that the intention of Ellen G. White, as reflected in her writings and the unquestionably prodigious effort involved therein, was anything other than a sincerely motivated and unselfish effort to place the understanding of Biblical truths in a coherent form for all to see and comprehend.""Considering all factors necessary in reaching a just conclusion on this issue, it is submitted that the writings of Ellen G. White were conclusively un-plagiaristic." (quoted in Adventist Review September 17, 1981)

♥

Tom 1 week ago

I should have known that any suggestion that copies of CG be widely distributed would follow with a resurrection of the plagiarism charge. I'll take a pass on that one. That aside, I'm not so sure that a revised and condensed GC is the best book to do what Ted Wilson is proposing. I remember a paperback of same with the last ten chapters of GC being used 30 years ago. It was entitled "The Impending Conflict."

Our minister at the time quoted EGW as saying this was the book that should be first and widely circulated for our (late 1800's) time. I reluctantly went along with it at the time. The result stirred up quite a great controversy in town with many folks getting a prejudicial view of Adventism from that first time introduction to the writing of EGW. I don't want to go down that road again, but it appears that Ted Wilson is bent on doing so, not withstanding the consequences, even though the paradigm in 2011 is vastly different from the 1880's when GC was written.

George Tichy 6 days ago

It seems that uncle Teddy has a very poor ability to foresee what can happen as result of an unresponsible distribution of GC books. Why to declare such a war on the RCC? Is he crazy?? It looks like!
G.W. Bush declared an unnecessary war against Iraq. Is he responsible for the blood of about 4,500 of our best troops, besides all the other damage? In my opinion, YES he is.

Ted Wilson is declaring an unnecessary war on the RCC. Will he be responsible for the consequences? You judge it by yourself!!!

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago

If the validity of the IJ is based on the Bible, why did not Bible students discover this valuable information until just prior to the supposed event?

If is decoded in the Bible, please explain how one can be absolutely certain of what occurs in heaven and at a particular earth time. Does heaven operate on earth's calendars?

Horace Butler
1 week ago

Because they didn't need it, yet. And the angel had specifically told Daniel that his message was sealed until the time of the end.

John the Baptist didn't come along and start preaching his advent message until about 6 months before Jesus started His ministry. There would have been no point in anyone preaching the message that the Messiah's arrival was imminent too far in advance of the event.

George Tichy
6 days ago

Elaine, it's not even worth to discuss it again. The IJ can't be find in the Bible. Try to give someone a "Bible Study" about it before talking to that person about the SOP and you will see the problem right away. How can someone pretend to teach a biblical doctrine that is not in the Bible? Even little kids can understand the absurdity of this matter!

Horace Butler
6 days ago

I'm sorry you're unable to find the IJ in the Bible, because is is so clear that a child with basic reading skills could comprehend it. It doesn't take the SOP to find it, either. It may take longer than some other Bible studies, but it's not a difficult as many would have us believe.

"How can someone pretend to teach a biblical doctrine that is not in the Bible?" Most Christians do it all the time by telling everyone that dead people go to heaven or hell when they die. But the IJ is clearly there, if one wants to find it. The hatred against this doctrine is puzzling, especially when coming from professed Adventists.

Ella M.
5 days ago

Elaine, I will not go there (the IJ controversy), but you are right that heaven/God is not on the same
time schedule as the earth. Time varies everywhere in the universe as does space. We don't understand either and that to me is why we can not claim to know the truth about the age of the earth, young or old (according to Gen 1:1, the earth can be very old by our current time; life, by God at least, not so old.) But where is heaven? Is it really up there? Maybe it is an alternate universe or dimension not so far away. (see Wright's book Surprised by Hope) Maybe it is right next to us or in that part of the universe we can't see and science cannot explain. So many questions that we cannot afford to say anything is certain other than God is love.

Vernon P. Wagner  3 days ago

Oh, for sure...without the Vatican, heaven wouldn't even have saints!

Elaine Nelson  1 week ago

"The time of the end" is one of the most ambiguous date-setting ever known. If you are in your 80s as I am, you are living in the "time of the end." The apostles, told by Jesus, was that they were living in "the time of the end." This message is as old as Christianity.

George Tichy  6 days ago

By the way Elaine, HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

Horace Butler  1 week ago

Typical skeptic's answer, which ignores the certainty of the final "time of the end," because of a rejection of the time frame set forth in the prophecies of Daniel. No point in arguing because you seem to have already made up your mind.

Vernon P. Wagner  6 days ago

"Time of the end"
Wasn't that 1844?
Missing out on so many 'raptures' is discouraging.

Edwin A. Schwisow  1 week ago

As a member of a long-time Adventist medical-missionary family in South America, and having participated in a number of evangelistic campaigns there, it has become clear that by and large attacking the papacy poses no general advantage in persuading people to consider joining Adventism. *The Great Controversy* is a two-edged sword, and should be used judiciously, or it can and will close more doors than it opens in Catholic nations. On the other hand, circulating the book is seen in some Adventist circles as proof positive that one is a "straight message" leader. We need to understand this as we evaluate this outreach.
Excellent points, Edwin.

Elaine, your comments about the "time of the end" reminded me of something someone told me when I used the term "the end of time". When he corrected me and said we were living in the "time of the end", I shrugged my shoulders and said what difference did it make, the terminology that is. He replied that there is a big difference between the "time of the end" and the "end of time" and then he proceeded to tell me an illustration I have never forgotten.

A turkey that is being fatten in the fall is living in the "time of the end". When his neck is finally stretched over the chopping block and the ax falls just before thanksgiving; for that turkey, THAT is the "end of time."

Every generation, since Christ's ascension, has believed it was living in the "time of the end." No one knows the day or hour of Christ's Second coming, except for the God the Father. The only certain thing is that with passing of each day we are another day closer to the "end of time." Beyond that is speculation.

“Particularly, read the 1919 Bible conference…”

I have for some time been familiar with the 1919 Bible Conference and have read an electronic version of the minutes. One comes away from the reading with sympathy for the participants over the difficulty of the issue with which they were dealing, admiration for the open, freedom of discussion with church administration, and a wish that the ongoing result would have been different. Though they were concerned about the misuse of Ellen White’s writings, here are just two comments from the minutes in her support. (Abreviated here; full context is very interesting.)

“W. W. Prescott: …I was over in England, stopping at the home of a brother there. It came to me just like a voice, "Read what it says in 'Patriarchs and Prophets' on that subject." I turned right around to a book case back of me, and took up "Patriarchs and Prophets" and began to look through it. I came right to the chapter that dealt with the subject, and I found exactly the thing I wanted to clarify my mind on that subject….”

“A. G. Daniells: …Sister White was never a fanatic, she was never an extremist. She was a level-headed woman. She was well-balanced. I found that so during a period of 40 years of association with her.”

Over four-plus decades of reading and re-reading her books, I have found balance, inspiration, beauty, strength, hope, wisdom, and encouragement in them. I will always value them from whatever source the information is found to be. However, as is clear from the 1919 Bible Conference and elsewhere, our church has been at fault in the use of her writings. I recommend David Newman’s article on Ellen White in the summer 2011 issue of Adventist Today and Richard Coffen’s response in the following issue, Fall 2011.
Preston Foster 6 days ago

Edwin,

No doubt, distributing TGC will be a catalyst for strong reactions from all sides. If this is done on the magnitude presently considered, things will not be the same. But, I believe, this is the mission of this church which has, too long been avoided (see "Have We Lost Sight of Our Mission?" http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=459).

The message of The Great Controversy narrative of Daniel and Revelation is, in my mind, the unique message of SDA's for "the end of time" (GREAT analogy!). It is the both the "7th day" and "adventist" message. It is not a laodicean mission. It is, however, a primary work for this part of the body of Christ.

It will test both our beliefs and the extent to which we actually believe.

George Tichy 6 days ago

What about concentrating on "preaching the Word of God, the Gospel" instead of focusing on triggering a worldwide religious conflict that could trigger a really bad, unnecessary situation?

One problem is that Adventists believe in this pretense "mission" of being the last and only true church, with the mission of disturbing the peace - and considering it a spiritual "mission". This is just absurd.

If The Desired orf Ages had been picked it would change the "mission" completely. Though, do we really need to utilize ANY book other than the Bible? It almost appears that publishing so many books may be benefiting someone... I am thinking on starting a publishing company and bidding for this printing... (and yes, I can also think of a small "commission" if necessary...!!!!)

But it seems that uncle Teddy is much more beligerent than people thought. He will put us all in a very troubling situation, a situation that had nothing to do with God.

Ella M. 5 days ago

If this is seen than more than just an advertising gimmick and thrown out, then we may be in trouble--maybe a time of trouble before it is necessary, brought on by ourselves. (Where is that EGW quote that says something like this?) Is this a way to get attention? Maybe, I just wish it were positive. Why not the book, Desire of Ages? It has the Gospel in it. GC is no spiritual mission and does not really appeal to the spiritual nature and the contemporary belief in tolerance.

If all we have to share is a day, we are bankrupt spiritually; and if we don't present its symbolism as rest in Jesus and His re-creation for us, it's a false gospel. Jesus is the seal, the Lord of the Sabbath with the Sabbath being the symbol--we maybe worshiping the symbol. Creation in the OT; re-creation in the NT period.
Preston Foster  

George,

It would seem to me the Adventist church either needs to advance its mission, change it, or abandon it. It says:

"The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to make disciples of all people, communicating the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and unite with His remnant Church, discipling them to serve Him as Lord and preparing them for His soon return."

Personalizing the issue to "Uncle Teddy" is a distraction that trivializes the issue to a person, rather than to the explicit, long-standing, stated mission of the Adventist church.

I agree, the Bible is the only book we need -- if it is read. The problem is that church-going people of all stripes don't read, they merely listen, selectively, to their preferred pastor or priest (and politician, in some cases). The proper use of the so-called "lesser light" is to lead us (and others) to the greater light -- the Bible. Perhaps the predicted controversy that this catalyst will bring will create demand for The Word, leading all to seek out exactly what it says and means.

"The Word of God, the Gospel," must be preached. If fact, it is. TBN, TCC, and other Protestant-backed networks are doing just that. What is not being being preached is the Adventist interpretation of The Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John (which, in fact, is gospel as well).

You may disagree with the mission, but, at least this GC president is working to accomplish what the organization claims as it reason for existence.

George Tichy  

Preston:

1) The "decree" that Adventist people don't read the Bible is just judgmental and a mere justification to force other literature on them. Why not to encourage them, then, to read the Bible more often? Why to come up with more books if they don't even read the one most important? By the way, "salvation by reading" is not such a hot idea. It sells books, but has no other relevance in itself. Learning is more important than reading. Reading a little and learning a lot is much better than reading a lot and learning a little. No "salvation by reading!"

2) Nobody ever needed, nor they need, any "lesser light" to lead to the ONLY light. This is just a retrograde adventist jargon to persuade people about the pretense relevancy of the red books. The black book is more than enough. To tell non-adventists that they need some "other books" to be able to understand "THE" Book is just ridiculous and absurd. Does that mean that for some centuries God kept the real/plain truth hidden from His own people? That's toooo much of a stretch.

3) The content of TGC is way far different from the "Adventist interpretation of Revelation".

4) AHA, here it is: It's a matter of denominational survival! "...to accomplish what the organization claims as it reason for existence." Do you really believe that the reason for the existence of the
SDAC is to preach a message that is above, and sometimes outside, the Bible? I used to think that way too, in the past. Because I was trained (brainwashed) to think that way. Until I started to really think independently and objectively. Only then I realised the absurdity of my prior thinking. That was when SOLA SCRIPTURA became the only source of faith and believe for me. But..., this is just me...

Edwin A. Schwisow
5 days ago

Is "The Great Controversy" the best book in the Adventist arsenal for making our first impression among such a vast Catholic public, in Latin America? Let us patiently distinguish between recognition of the central genius of the book in classical Adventism and concerns about how to use the book in marketing the faith. Differences of opinion regarding the second question should not necessarily imply disrespect for the book itself. It certainly doesn't in my mind.

Elaine Nelson
5 days ago

The Gospel lived is by far the best method. Reading is almost passe today and a throw-away book is headed for the landfill. A quiet, Christian life is far more Gospel than will ever be achieved by a thousand G.C. books. Little, or no thought has been given to the possible results of this foolish endeavor. It's your tithe money, folks.

Vernon P. Wagner
4 days ago

Elaine is right, of course.

When I travel by air, I'm usually the only one reading one of those oldtime things called a 'book,' Almost every passenger has an Amazon Kindle, or iPad for reading. Today, I watched a minister on TV preaching not from a Bible, but from one such digital device. Clay tablets replaced petroglyphs, scrolls replaced clay tablets, books replaced scrolls, computer science has replaced books. If they intend to reach the masses, they should use the appropriate medium, and it ain't books!

Preston Foster
5 days ago

George,

I don't argue against sola scriptura. The point I am pushing is, what will drive people to read the Bible? Perhaps a discussion of who the beast and the image of the beast in Revelation are will do so (indeed, if scripture is believed, it points to someone or entity). That discussion might begin with the distribution of TGC -- whether it is actually read by the masses or not. Given modern media, it is likely to be controversially excerpted, in order to "frame the story."

The Great Controversy is not needed to understand the Bible. I don't recall saying or implying that. However, without a catalyst PRIOR to the actual end time events themselves, we are unlikely to
have a focused public conversation about the prophecies of Revelation -- particularly about the Adventist interpretation about those prophecies. The purpose of prophecy is to provide a framework for understanding events BEFORE they happen. It is possible that a catalyst can, very effectively, drive others to the Bible.

It is not about denominational survival (if that were the point, they would likely NOT initiate such a controversial tactic). It is about being true to what you say you are about.

That is is more rare than most people care to appreciate.

John Mark 5 days ago

George,
The doctrine of Sola Scriptura itself would not have spread or become established if it was not for the reformers writing tons and tons of books beside the Bible. Writing is like preaching it's just another way of proclaiming the Word of God. By your logic all Christians should be doing is printing Bibles. And your logic also seems to view the Gift of Prophecy as dead because of your interpretation of the concept of Closed Canon and Sola-Scriptura; ideas which ironically are not explicitly found in the Scriptura.

Elaine Nelson 5 days ago

Men made the decision to close the canon several hundred years after the last book now in the Bible was written.

There is also nothing in the verses in Revelation designating Ellen White as the "Spirit of Prophecy." A corruption of the text and assumption that cannot be validated from the Bible which was closed nearly 2,000 years earlier. That is no different than Joseph Smith being proclaimed a prophet at about the same time as EGW. A claim that neither can be supported by scripture.

William Noel 5 days ago

All these discussion points ignore a major question: will distributing so many copies of any book be effective? Our illusions say yes while reality shouts an emphatic "NO!" Literature ministries have largely disappeared in North America for a simple reason- ineffectiveness. That distributing so many books would even proposed shows how deeply they are rooted in what worked a century ago while removed from present reality. The majority of people in North America are post-Christian and on-guard against any such obviously religious books. Their defensiveness causes them to be offended when someone sends or gives them such a book. Such offenses grow their anti-church prejudice. So there is more than just the potential for a well-intended effort will do far more harm than good, there is the reality that it will drive people away from the Kingdom of God instead of drawing them closer.

There is yet a second problem with such an approach: that we Adventists have become so exclusively enamored with the writings of Ellen White that we have allowed them to become our be-all and do-all resource. This causes us to refuse to even consider the possibility that the Holy Spirit could inspire a more effective approach to the public.
If the church in North America is to grow instead of shrink as the senior generation dies, then we've got to learn new ways of spreading the Gospel.

Kevin Riley 4 days ago

I wouldn't say book distribution is ineffective entirely. There is still a sector of the public for whom it is effective. We need to distribute books AND ALSO do other do other things, new and old. What we should not do is discontinue anything that proves not to be effective in reaching everyone. The idea that we will someday come up with the perfect program that will somehow appeal to everyone is a chimera. It is as likely as finding utopia somewhere in the next valley.

Ella M. 5 days ago

Tichey,

You have a right to your opinion, and I don't dispute it, but I don't see a right to downgrade those who have other ideas with terminology such as "brainwashed." In a sense we are all brainwashed in what we choose to listen to or read, aren't we? I find the church writings to be filled with Bible quotes on almost every page or paragraph. Where do you get the idea it is not biblical? And it certainly was never a a "source" of belief or faith. Misused, most definitely.

Maybe the Lord can turn this unwise decision to send GC around into some sort of blessing or, if not, to do no harm.

We could send the "black book" [Bible] around and take out all the offending language in that. :)

Elaine, The quiet Christian life is our personal witness that glorifies God and the only Gospel many will see. My problem is that so few can live up to it, including myself, at least on a consistent basis. As a child with some ADD problems, I used to pray intensely that I not embarrass God. But I did, many times. Maybe acceptance of each other is just as important.

John Mark 5 days ago

Elaine, of course, the Bible does not specifically endorse or condemn Ellen White. My point is simply against George's view that Ellen White's books should be excluded from being considered important by the doctrine of Sola Scriptura when the Scriptura contains explicit support for the ongoing gift of prophecy and no such support for the doctrine of sola scriptura or the doctrine of a closed cannon. Not that I disagree with upholding a form of Sola Scriptura or the closed cannon but those beliefs shouldn't be used to exclude future spiritual guidance.

David 5 days ago

While this heated debated continues in AT without significant consequences, the SDA church will delivery 162,000,000 copies of the GC. The results could be significant for the global grow of the church. Even if is only effective 5-10% that means that another 8,000,000 to 16,000,000 new members for the church. Assuming the worse predictions 1- 2 % that represent another 1,600,000 to 3,200,000 new members. Surprise? Looks like president is a very smart person! What other method could be as effective like he is planning? Good for him he deserved to be the president of
our loved church!

William Noel 4 days ago

Try .01% effective, or less. The bigger problem is the number of people who will be offended by receiving an unsolicited book of the type and how it will harden their anti-Christian opinions, thus making it more difficult to win them in the future. If the research detailed in the book "Unchristian" is even partly accurate, each copy sent out in North America that is received with what we consider a "positive" response will be counter-balanced by at least a hundred times than many negative responses.

We need to reconsider if we're really in the business of bringing people into the Kingdom of God, or driving them away. We operate under the illusion that we're doing the first when we're best at doing the latter.

Kevin Riley 4 days ago

I believe in Australia the literature evangelists are handing out the book to those who indicate some receptiveness, rather than distributing them to all and sundry. I also would prefer Desire of Ages or Steps to Christ had been chosen, but it is still a better strategy than sending the books out unsolicited. That would not go down well here.

John Mark 5 days ago

"I used to think that way too, in the past. Because I was trained (brainwashed) to think that way. Until I started to really think independently and objectively. Only then I realised the absurdity of my prior thinking. That was when SOLA SCRIPTURA became the only source of faith and believe for me.

But..., this is just me"

I missed this part. Interesting that in this thread we have a human subject declaring that objective thinking will lead straight to SOLA SCRIPTURA while in "Shift The Way You Think" we have another human subject declaring that good objective thinking will invariably lead one to enlightenment style questioning of Biblical authority. Funny how many contradictory objective truths our various human subjects come up with. Perhaps this is why the current era is abadoning the search for objective truth. What I find ironic is that some in the church want us to adopt modern thinking to stay relevant when the world is quickly moving onto post-modern thinking, if we are going to sell our spiritual birthright for a bowl of lentils, why not at least get a steaming fresh bowl.

David 5 days ago

While this heated debated continues in AT without significant consequences, the SDA church will delivery 162,000,000 copies of the GC. The results could be significant for the global grow of the church. Even if is only effective 5-10% that means that another 8,000,000 to 16,000,000 new members for the church. Assuming the worse predictions 1- 2 % that represent another 1,600,000 to 3,200,000 new members. Surprise? Looks like the president is a very smart person! What other
method could be as effective like he is planning? Good for him he deserved to be the president of our loved church!

**William Noel** 4 days ago

Please remember that the distribution of that many copies is just a dream and one that will cost a huge multiple of the largest amount that has ever been given to any mission outreach project in church history. Wake me up when the number passes five million.

**Elaine Nelson** 5 days ago

Is this the best way to gain new members? It may be the most expensive, but how many persons do you, individually, who were converted to Adventism solely by reading GC with no other influence whatsoever?

**John Mark** 5 days ago

David the figures you give are more likely to be the number of people who don't throw the GC in the trash bin than the number of people who convert. What I don't get about this venture is it goes against Ellen White's specific counsel to not give the books, but to sell them. I'm not anti GC like most of Atoday and Spectrum crowd, but I do question the pragmatism in mass give aways. If we sell the books we will be targeting the people who have an interest in these things and thus avoid waste. Even people who would read the GC are going to be less likely to read something they get in the mail for free than something they invest their own money in and see as their own. It is ironic that we are about to do a mass give away of a book who's author said to not do mass give aways - but maybe I'm missing something.

**William Noel** 4 days ago

Here are some hard direct-mail marketing numbers for religious publications. In the US, 99.95% of such unsolicited items go into the trash within five minutes of being taken out of the mailbox. Of the remaining .05%, .04 will go into the trash within 24 hours. Of the remaining .01%, only one in about 30 will ever be opened and even partly read. How many will result in a response? How many decimal places can you count? It is a well-motivated challenge, but a horrible waste of money.

**Preston Foster** 3 days ago

William,

Business people don't go around losing money for kicks. If direct mail, cold-calling, DTDR, weren't cost effective, it would have stopped long ago. The larger the "buy" (in terms of "reach," in this case 162 million) the cheaper (more efficient) it gets. With a large buy, you can go way behind the decimal and still make money.

I advertise on Facebook. A "good response rate for me is 0.069%. Of those, about 1% buys.
From this computer, I can reach 82 million women in 13 countries.

I advertise every week. It's VERY efficient.

But making money isn't the issue here -- it is saving souls. And our ways are not His. Christ came to earth to ransom whosoever will. I'm sure, in terms of the efficiency of His blood, that doesn't make "sense" either.

Thank God.

Elaine Nelson 2 days ago

How cost effective will it be for millions of GC to be mailed or distributed? Has the cost been calculated? Is it not important to the church that the monies they are given to be used in the best way? How does this compare with the other forms of evangelism? Shouldn't there be some estimates? There must be a cost for each book printed and mailed, what are those figures and how will they be decided? Will each conference agree to take a certain number of books which they will distribute? How much is known about this entire program? Has anyone seen the cost estimates?

Businesses must estimate the costs of any new venture, especially when it is their money. The G.C. is much like the government: it's not their money so there is no reason to use it wisely.

William Noel 2 hours ago

Preston,

I have an MBA so I understand what you're saying. Remember, it all depends on what you're selling, how it is presented and if it appears to match the recipient's recognized need(s). Each week or so we get a thick envelope in the mail that is stuffed with coupons for replacement windows, pizzas and whatever else. We have used a few of those coupons but 99.9% have gone in the trash. Commercial products are one thing because they are generally viewed in a positive manner. Yes, a customer may prefer one brand of pizza over another, but they're both generally viewed in a positive manner. Churches are viewed very differently and, as a result, generally get far lower response rates. Two pastors of large churches (1,000+ members) in the Huntsville area have told me of spending significant sums of money to put ads in that same envelope and getting no identifiable responses.

The problem gets even worse when you start sending people religious books. People feel like whoever is sending the book is saying whatever they believe is wrong. That's a big turn-off that increases negative prejudice and makes future soul-winning more difficult. A good example of this was a few years ago when an Adventist group in the area was distributing a book about coming Sunday laws. It was a big issue to them because of their particular prophetic obsession. Those books created huge anti-Adventist prejudice that continues to this day. A while back I was working on a home improvement project at a house in the northwest part of the county where the area had been books had been delivered to every house several years before. The home owner appreciated our help. Then she overheard a conversation between two of my workers about sunday laws in prophecy. She was ready to throw us off the property with the work incomplete until I assured her we had
not been involved with the distribution of those books.

George Tichy  5 days ago

What about using a different book? Why do we need to declare an unnecessary war on people of other faith? Is this what some are calling "Ted's wisdom"??!! I can't believe it!!

Horace Butler  5 days ago

You write like this is some novel idea. Ellen White wanted this book distributed far and wide. We've fallen down on the job in recent decades. All Brother Wilson wants to do is get back on track. No one is declaring war on "people of other faith." That is the straw man that is always set up to make us look bad. The dispute is with the church itself, not with the man in the pew. It's no different from someone saying that they love Cubans, but have issues with their government. The papacy has departed far from Scripture, and appears to have no intention of ever going back to the truth. The sins of Babylon need to be exposed, one way or another.

John Mark  5 days ago

Ellen White wanted her books distributed far and wide through the canvassing work. Do you have anything where she says to give her major books away, but because I recall reading her specifically counsel against such methods.

William Noel  3 days ago

Good point! Her concept was distribution through the canvassing work. A person who buys a book is far more likely to read it than if it arrives unsolicited. The problem is that the canvassing work has largely died.

Vernon P. Wagner  3 days ago

Tried canvassing about 50 years ago, because of propaganda I'd been hearing all my life about canvassing. My 'big idea' was to visit LLU Alumni offices, and sell the stuff to SDA doctors for their waiting rooms.

Sales...ZERO!

If SDA docs don't want 'em, may as well forget it.

Preston Foster  2 days ago

Remember, this is not a sales effort nor a business deal where efficiency is the primary metric. This an attempt to start a world wide conversation about a set of prophecies. What worked or didn't work in a neighborhood or metro area may be a function of timing or affected by complementary tactics (or the lack of them). Distributing 162 million copies of a book that challenges Protestant and Catholic traditions will likely not be
The point, I believe, is to purposefully upset the equilibrium in a way that sets the stage for a specific conversation.

Concerns about cost-effectiveness pale in comparison to concerns about the mark of the beast and that of his image. Let's not avoid the real work.

Like it or not, this initiative is directly "on mission."

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Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

Amazing! That efficiency is unimportant on such a massive distribution plan! That the church would embark upon a plan with no cost estimates and the whole idea of "upsetting the equilibrium"?

Currently, the equilibrium of millions is focused on the global economy and their own pocketbooks. To initiate such a program in a time of serious financial distress worldwide and expect millions to be interested in a "mark of the beast" is to ignore reality. If this is the mission, it is very short-sighted and poorly planned.

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Preston Foster 1 day ago

Elaine,

Many who believe the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and the Great Controversy narrative of them see those issues as having more importance (and perhaps providing context to) this and worldwide problems. What would be the ideal state of world affairs to begin such a conversation? The mission of this church is, explicitly, to preach the gospel, in the context of the 3 angels' messages. That it is doing so seems mighty threatening to those who claim neither membership nor belief it the church's take on prophecy.

Why is that?

If you are not a member, presumably, it is not your money that is being "wasted." There is no evidence that costs have not been considered, only speculation by critics that they have not. I'm a member -- and I fully support the initiative. What metrics would make this a wise investment from your standpoint?

The church is moving on its mission.

---

Preston Foster 1 day ago

CORRECTION: "... see those issues as having more importance THAN (and, perhaps, providing context to) this and OTHER worldwide problems."
Elaine Nelson

Preston, who are the "many who believe the prophecies of D&R and the GC as having more importance"? How many Adventists believe these are so important and to liberally support this program? Has anyone done a sampling survey to determine this interest?

As for "many," because Adventists may feel it is important, presumably these books are to be distributed to non-SDAs, who may not at all believe that the ideas expressed are of any importance. Shouldn't there first be created an interest, even a desire to obtain and read a book? With fewer reading books daily, to be given a non-requested book does not suddenly create a burning desire to read it. Is this the best way to evangelize the cities?

Preston Foster

Elaine,

Again, the purpose of this initiative may not be traditional evangelism (i.e., seeking "convert" others to Adventism via baptism). The likely purpose, I believe, is to inject a catalyst into the body of Christ to begin a public conversation about the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in the context of present day and future events.

As I have said many times in this space, the purpose of prophecy is to inform others PRIOR to the fulfillment of those prophecies. Providing timely information allows those who head it to act or react wisely. Adventism is a prophetic church. Unless we share what we believe before the time of its fulfillment, it will be useless. Further, if we believe it to be true, but do not share it, it would be irresponsible, bordering on negligent.

Traditional cost/benefit analyses do not apply. What is the price of a soul?

Elaine Nelson

How is Christ introduced via D&R if merely a free mailer? It only introduces SDA interpretation of prophecy. If a pamphlet is in the mail informing of a new nightclub in town, a new free seminar, information on life insurance, it will not be equally considered timely at all. Timely is in the eye of the beholder. What is "timely" prophecy to an SDA is not what is equivalent in the general population, which is who the recipients will be.

The sentiment expressed that "if we do not share it we will be irresponsible" is another form of Pilate washing his hand and releasing himself from all responsibility. "I've done my work, now let them read the book." That is not Christian witnessing but relieving one's conscience. Has witnessing become so impersonal as to remove all personal involvement? Why not just send money and let others do the work and call it witnessing.
Preston Foster  1 day ago

You seem to think the distribution of the Great Controversy is the end rather than a means to an end. The strategy is, likely, to leverage the free media surrounding the story to begin a conversation about what the prophecies mean.

Christ is introduced to all by the Holy Spirit. The fact that the book is "merely" free, has no effect on the content of the book. The full title of the book is "The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan." In that context, it is fairly easy to see how Christ is introduced.

It is, perhaps, your cynicism that sees sharing urgent news as an abandonment of responsibility (it has been said, "Cynicism is the embers of idealism"). Doing so, if it were true, might fool men/women, but not God. Pilate was looking to be politically correct. Adventists are looking, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to be effective (and, clearly, not politically correct).

It would seem that those who are demanding a rational cost/benefit analysis to determine whether or not people should be warned would be more likely to be in search of Pilate's wash basin.

Elaine Nelson  1 day ago

What are the plans to follow up and how will it be done? Are these not legitimate questions? Where are those plans to be found and shouldn't they all be laid out before beginning, or merely playing by ear?

Call it cynicism, but as one who has seen many such plans for the initiation with nothing to follow, shouldn't there be a revelation of the entire program or will it be just "waiting to see"?

George Tichy  5 days ago

I know it's not a novel idea. It's actually a very old idea. But this doesn't make it a "good" idea. Are Adventists able to preach the Gospel without opening fire on other religions? Apparently not!

Vernon P. Wagner  3 days ago

Yes, apparently not!

Trevor Hammond  3 days ago

Well Mr. Tichy and Mr. Wagner I go out street preaching in the area where we work as a Church. I have had Sunday Christians call us to conduct church services at their homes and have on numerous occasions put up a tent outside their homes to accommodate larger numbers. I have been preaching also in some Sunday Churches as well where the Pastor's or members
have been close friends of mine. I think you guys miss the 'bigger' picture of the gospel and as Mr Tom would say looking through the telescope the wrong way 'round. I have a large percentage of Sunday Church members who attend Sabbath Services including, Muslims, Hindu's, a Jehovah's witness who wants to be baptized (He's the guy I carry from his house up and down some stairs to the car/wheelchair, every Sabbath morning and back home after the Youth Meeting, including pushing and pulling him in wheelchair up fifteen stairs at the school where we use the hall for church). Yeah the gospel in my world is much bigger and dynamic than you assert within the Adventist context and understanding of it. Adventism still offers a relevant channel for the Gospel of Jesus Christ of which I testify too. Many are cuurently in the valley of decision and we hope that the Gospel will bring us a few more souls into the kingdom via the Adventist Church ministry in Christ Jesus.

♥T

William Noel 2 hours ago

Keep up the good work, Trevor! We need more people who are willing to step out and do what you are doing. You understand the reality of needing to get out and mingle on the streets of Babylon before we can call people out and expect them to move.

David 5 days ago

Not been born in SDA home I know personally the effect of the GC. Also I know many people who were impressed and became Adventists because of this book! We could all speculate about the results, but judging from the past, I believe that this book will continue to help many people to be interested in the Bible and became Christians. Although we don't know all the details how these books are going to be distributed, for sure all the churches around the globe will have some adaptation for their needs in their regions. For sure this book will be (after the Bible) the most printed ever. I will be delighted to give donations and time for this project. GO SDA CHURCH is about time! We know that Holy Spirit is in this project!

David 5 days ago

You the ones in AT that criticize and oppose to this idea probably ignore the potential of the GC. For the ones who at one time we did not have any interest in the Bible, this book was a key to open our eyes to the eternal gospel! and became SDA Christians.

David 5 days ago

It is hard to believe that some people here in AT that suppose to be Christians are criticizing a project that will bring people to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. I wonder under of what kind of influence are writing in this bog.

George Tichy 5 days ago
In my case, under the influence of about 60 of adventism, including attending an adventist school from 1st grade until finishing college (School of Religion, BA in Theology). Also under the influence of many people (including some bright scholars) who taught me to think objectively. And under the influence of my father who always encouraged me to utilize the brains given by God, and to avoid being a mere repeater of other people's ideas or biases. But I am aware that there are some people who become uncomfortable with independent thinkers, and often start judging their spirituality. I already got used to that...

The name of the book: On The Edge of Time-it is clear to me that just by going through the name the book would naturally be focussing on on the times as these and their implications from the Adventist perspective. When we say we are living on the edge of time there has to be a message of urgency to take the right side in this great battle between the good and the evil forces aka the GC which ultimately means that the issue of Judgement are to be the subject of the discussion. Talking about Time and the circumstances as ours from Adventist perspective and ignoring the IJ to me cannot happen. One might not find the phrase 'IJ' or some might even quickly claim or assume that the Church has debunked the scripture based belief of 'IJ' just through this review as seen here but the reality is that 'IJ' is as inseperable from SDA belief as that of Sabbath (Don't comment quickly telling me 'Oh JIMS777 you mean other beliefs/doctrines should be debunked'.....i don't mean that). How can one talk about the SDA movement and it's 3A's mesage of REV 14 and say that IJ has been dismissed......people here on the forum to promote their own agendas would perhaps quickly come up with their assumption...'hey guys GC has debunked IJ' .....LOL......A movement lead by the Spirit of truth that has much to do with understanding of God's judgement of love and his designated time frame....such a movement as this would not give up the truths upon which it's founations are rooted....that easily......

Some respected dear elderlies here have even made their own interpretation of the 'Time of end'......i.e if i am on 80's or 70s then Jesus is talking only about my life span and my individual physical end and not the end of time from Adventist perspective ....oops......i hear such interpretations in my country so often......to think of the end of time that way is to clearly miss the eschatological issue from the theological point of view if we really want to discuss it from Biblical perspective......

What more funny thing here is that as a a trademark of AT bloggers and commentators to prove their anti adventist points they as usual love dragging EGW into some controversy.....it gets to such mean level that through the personalizing of the issue such as 'Teddy' they display that they even don't respect their ownselves.......And mind you these are the dear people who love fingerpointing the traditonals that they are legalist who forget grace and live by work not by faith.......but as the wise man says' Wisdom is justified in her doings (mine)'

yes there might be more people who would hate the SDA church when the project finishes circulation but there might be also the working of the SPIRIT in such a manner that more people might be joining the mainstream SDA Church......people are different and make their own choices and those choices always don't have to be for SDA Church's membership or lets say other advantage....We are called to speak of God's judgement alongside of His endless love. We don't have to be popular and crowd pleaser......we are to be telling the truth......Truth is bitter at times and might seem stranger than your hollywood flicks but then it is the truth that sets free and triumphs......I see that in SDA's traditional beliefs......For me it gets this simple......I don't change my true traditional beliefs but i tell them if possible from rooftop because i know IJ means gospel, Rev 14 means gospel Rev 12 means gospel, Prophetic timelines means gospel.......though these are too
hard for some here to accept...... thanks

David
5 days ago

That really is a paradox! under the influence and “independent thinking” and "religious background" to oppose and criticize a method that for many people was a “key” to be interested in the Bible and eventually accept Jesus.

Trevor Hammond
4 days ago

Hey JIMS Seven (Wise man from the East) [part 1]
RE your comment: “A movement lead by the Spirit of truth that has much to do with understanding of God's judgement of love and his designated time frame....such a movement as this would not give up the truths upon which it's founations are rooted....that easily.....”

I would concur wholeheartedly with your comments in your recent post and the excerpt I pasted above. I particularly like the ‘judgement of love’ in reference to the Bible based Investigative Judgement which is still very much a part of traditional Adventist belief and you are right, it ain’t goin’ away ‘that easily’ jus’ yet even if culture progressives any further into the cultural sand. It IS a Judgement of LOVE. Nicely put. I have tried to reassure many commenter’s here on the ‘Apple Tree’ by trying to allay their ’spooky IJ’ fears and remind them that the IJ isn’t a ‘spooky’ boogieman and that it is God’s Love that allows us by Grace to ‘BOLDLY ENTER’ into the presence of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Also, so good to note that the proverbial ‘axe’ didn’t ‘cut’ your Apple Tree comments down this time ‘round. Maybe, like me, you are off ‘death row’ for now at least. Through the positive influence of the GC in my life I can say that my journey to 'skid row' was averted when Jesus turned my life around.

I like this line too in your comment: “Truth is bitter at times and might seem stranger than your hollywood flicks but then it is the truth that sets free and triumphs.....I see that in SDA's traditional beliefs......For me it gets this simple......”

Yeah, cultural progressives can be so narrow minded and fundamentalist in their thinking and approach that it really surprises me and shows in contrast how broad-based and progressive Trad’s really are when the gospel is concerned. After all we don’t teach cheap Grace and limited gospel etc.

♥T

Trevor Hammond
4 days ago

Hey JIMS Seven (Wise man from the East) [part 2]

By the way, from what I have gathered, JIMS Seven, from some posts, is that EVERYONE in the US of A doesn’t read paper books any more, they ALL have got access to e-books via internet, iPad/iPod, Kindle, phones and other sorts of electronic devices which apparently they ALL have available so they don’t need books. There aren’t long power outages it seems, so candlelight reading is extinct. (Who knows? One day they may invent ‘wireless electricity’ lol ...)

11/4/2011 11:44 AM
One last thing JIMS Seven, I have had the personal experience of been led to Jesus Christ by the very same book which some deride here. The Great Controversy writings led me to a personal relationship with Jesus and a journey in which I have never looked back. IT WAS AT A POINT IN MY LIFE WHEN I WOULD NEVER HAVE PICKED UP EITHER THE BIBLE OR EVEN THE DESIRE OF AGES OR STEPS TO CHRIST for that matter; but the somehow the GC got me stuck into my search for truth and pointed me in the direction away from the ‘camp of satan’ to his more than able (more than wonderful) opponent in this great controversy: the Mighty Lord of Hosts, Jesus Christ, The Lamb of God, Who was for sinners slain. The rest is history (even in the making 'cos He ain't finished with me yet).

Hey, what can I say, I probably would not have been posting here on this Apple Tree were it not for my ‘journey’ with the Lord. Praise God for the Ministry of Ellen white and for the way her writings have lead souls to Christ and the Holy Bible: always by default – all the time – to Christ and the Bible - and it even was the full version GC that made this significant start in my journey with Christ for me.

I would put my head on the block and venture out and say that this has been the experience of thousands (if not millions) who have encountered Christ through the pen of inspiration. Praise God! So long, and Peace JIMS Seven, (Wise man from the East).

♥T

William Noel 3 days ago

Trevor,

Your experience highlights the conceptual challenge that is created when we look at what has worked on a limited basis in the past and assume that future results will grow in a linear fashion according to how much we increase distribution. It seems logical. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. No matter how many times you increase distribution the potential number who will respond as you did does not grow. Being effective requires that we have a variety of resources and, as we are guided by the Holy Spirit, we individually distribute those materials to those who appear interested. That is a far more effective approach because it combines personal contact with private study and, hopefully, invitation to join a nurturing spiritual family in the local church.

Trevor Hammond 3 days ago

Well Sir, just to let you know that the work of sowing the seed is what we have been called to do. The numbers? Well that's the work of the Holy Spirit. He convicts; He subdues; He transforms. All we are is instruments in His hands. Every nation, kindred, tongue and people, is based on the premise that each individual from within each of these groups is given opportunity to 'HEAR' the gospel of the kingdom, which includes the Three Angels Messages of Revelation 14.

This is why I will say again, that cultural progressives are much more narrow minded in their evangelical vision for our church. Traditionalists will in most cases support diverse manners of evangelism including the distribution of this inspiring book especially to a secular lost society who have NO real interest in who Jesus is and what He has done on the cross. The GC looks
at the whole picture from a different perspective which in many cases through the perfect working of the Holy Spirit. The recipient of such a book will then be drawn to Christ the Saviour and be ready to 'step to Christ' and learn about the 'desire of ages'.

Yes, many sadly will choose otherwise and reject its message just like many cultural Adventists have done and as always they will have to deal with the consequences of rejecting light. Perhaps we have progressed so much that we have forgotten who we are and what we have been called for as a church. Maybe some have been side-tracked from our mission in our effort to compete with the Charasmatics, perhaps, with the cheap grace and all...

♥T

William Noel 3 days ago

Trevor,

Apparently you and I have had very different experiences. From where I stand, it is the traditionalists (most particularly senior church leaders such as those at the GC) who are defending and promoting singular and exclusive methods of outreach without regard to their effectiveness and the progressives who are promoting innovations that are proving to be far more effective.

To give you a contrast, the church I used to attend held public crusades, distribute EGW books, etc. It consistently lost as many members as it gained. The church I now attend tried that and quickly realized the futility. So we allowed God to develop gift-based ministries. The results? We haven't held an evangelistic crusade or had any serious literature distribution in six years. Our membership has almost doubled since then. People cry when they have to move away. There is more love and closer fellowship than I have experienced in any other congregation.

Trevor Hammond 4 days ago

Hey JIMS Seven (Wise man from the East)
By the way, JIMS Seven, ironically, it was a Sunday Church lady who, literally told me to 'read the Great Controversy, in a chain of unexpected events which - just happened - just like that...

♥T

Trevor Hammond 4 days ago

Yeah Dr. David, I agree - from my personal experience the GC book was a "KEY' which opened my heart to the gospel. The Holy Spirit worked in my life through Ellen White writings. It's a pity that so many culturalists have progressed so far into the rabbit hole...that they don't know White from wrong. ☺

♥T

Trevor Hammond 3 days ago

Here is an excerpt from the 'controversial' book which seems pretty Christ centred to me:
"In the banishment of Satan from heaven, God declared His justice and maintained the honor of His throne. But when man had sinned through yielding to the deceptions of this apostate spirit, God gave an evidence of His love by yielding up His only-begotten Son to die for the fallen race. [Page 501] In the atonement the character of God is revealed. The mighty argument of the cross demonstrates to the whole universe that the course of sin which Lucifer had chosen was in no wise chargeable upon the government of God.

In the contest between Christ and Satan, during the Saviour's earthly ministry, the character of the great deceiver was unmasked. Nothing could so effectually have uprooted Satan from the affections of the heavenly angels and the whole loyal universe as did his cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer. The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ should pay him homage, his presumptuous boldness in bearing Him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple, the malicious intent betrayed in urging Him to cast Himself down from the dizzy height, the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love, and at the last to cry, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"--all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe.

It was Satan that prompted the world's rejection of Christ. The prince of evil exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus; for he saw that the Saviour's mercy and love, His compassion and pitying tenderness, were representing to the world the character of God. Satan contested every claim put forth by the Son of God and employed men as his agents to fill the Saviour's life with suffering and sorrow. The sophistry and falsehood by which he had sought to hinder the work of Jesus, the hatred manifested through the children of disobedience, his cruel accusations against Him whose life was one of unexampled goodness, all sprang from deep-seated revenge. The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror.

When the great sacrifice had been consummated, Christ ascended on high, refusing the adoration of angels until He had presented the request: "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." John 17:24. Then [Page 502] with inexpressible love and power came forth the answer from the Father's throne: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Hebrews 1:6. Not a stain rested upon Jesus. His humiliation ended, His sacrifice completed, there was given unto Him a name that is above every name."

♥T

Trevor Hammond 3 days ago

From what I have gathered here, we need to keep some copies of the book for the many unbelievers, ex-believers, dis-believers, and those mis-believers, right here, even on AT.

♥T
Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

"Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society....As the Protestant churches reject the clear, Scriptural arguments in defense of God's law, they will long to silence those whose faith cannot overthrow by the Bible....The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday....In free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance....As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration"

Only one of the paragraphs in the book which is centered on "Sabbath keepers" and "Christendom" will enforce Sunday observance.

Trevor Hammond 3 days ago

The book and the paragraph you quote is spot on though. If rulers and legislators could force evolution theory on the mainstream Christian America and get it accepted as a norm then Sunday observance would be a piece of cake. It will just be a matter of time. Hey, even homosexual 'marriage' is been sweeping across the American states. Stringent security measures since 9/11 has changed what was 'free' America. The economic instability, social depravity and depleted health care funds are an easy taking for the Sunday movement. They've already started the march in Europe and the US WILL follow suite as the leader of the so-called 'free' First World. How appropiate that they call it the First 'Day' World. Seventh-day Adventists have a mandate to warn the world of this. Why would ex Adventists and other non-believers be so agitated by such Adventist activity. Why don't they go and preach their own ex-Adventist brand of the gospel. So far I have never ever had one ex-Adventist knock on my door or approach me with the message of ex-Adventism. I just see them standing on the sidelines doing lots of heckling even though they have no real dog in this fight. Weird!

♥T

Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

There's nothing in the copied portion that has anything whatever to do with either evolution, homosexual "marriage" that you mention. They are strawmen and red herrings introduced that have nothing to do with what has been presented. Introducing subjects never mentioned does not divert from the original article and is only a diversionary tactic.

Gailon Arthur Joy 3 days ago

A straight message is unabridged and does not water down the Plain Truth. Where is our Faith that we water down and abridge the nessage the Lord's own Messenger has given us. Will it become of Non-affect?
The message is a two edged sword by design and is certain to raise the issues addressed to a crecendo that will convict or harden the heart of the reader...so be it!!!

Disappointed in the lack of Faith demonstrated by abridging such an important message;

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

William Noel
2 hours ago

The unborn are not ready to drink milk and newborns cannot eat solid food. So how do you defend the concept of presenting the undiluted "plain truth" to the growing majority who are not ready to receive and digest it? How many souls will we prejudice against the Gospel by trying to force-feed them more than they are ready to receive?
150th Anniversary of the Ohio Conference

Submitted Oct 23, 2011
By Atoday News Team

100th Anniversary of the Book Acts of the Apostles
150th Anniversary of the Ohio Conference

An estimated 5,000 Seventh-day Adventists from across the Midwest gathered near Wilmington, Ohio, Sabbath, October 22, to celebrate two historic milestones. It was the 100th anniversary of the publication of Acts of the Apostles by Ellen White and the 150th anniversary of the formation of the Ohio Conference. A history published in the program booklet indicated that Ohio was probably the first organized state conference in the denomination instead of the long-standing claim by Michigan.

Speakers included General Conference (GC) President Ted N. C. Wilson, Pastor Rebekah Liu from China and Dr. Ganoune Diop, a missiologist on the GC staff from Senegal. Pastor Liu is a Ph.D., candidate at Andrews University and pastors a district in Sichuan province in the People’s Republic of China that includes more than 400 Adventist churches. In May last year she was ordained to the gospel ministry by the church in China.

The focus of the day was on the forward-looking mission of the Adventist movement, its global reach and growing diversity. The event was called, “Acts 11.” The speakers embody these elements. Pastor Liu was raised in a Communist family and is writing a Ph.D., dissertation in English which also requires a knowledge of Biblical languages. She preaches in more than one language in China and, together with her pastor husband, is the parent of a six-year-old. Dr. Diop was already an accomplished musician when as a Muslim young adult he became a Christian and joined the Adventist Church. He has a Ph.D., in Old Testament studies and currently serves as the denomination’s primary representative at the United Nations in Geneva and New York City. Pastor Wilson grew up in a missionary family in the Middle East, started in the ministry in New York City where he earned a Ph.D., at New York University, and has served as a missionary in Africa and Russia.

Pastor Liu told stories about her own journey to faith and the rapid growth of the Adventist movement in China, even during years of persecution. Dr. Diop laid out a theological framework for relating Adventist theology to world religions, what he called a “Trinitarian approach to mission” in which “the way of the Father...the way of the Son...and the way of the Holy Spirit,” guide missionary activity and personal witness. He stressed a “kind, respectful dialog,” with those of different faiths. “We do not need to put down other faiths to hold up Jesus,” he stated. “Adventists must seek to meet this world’s needs before Christ returns.”

Pastor Wilson also emphasized a wholistic approach to Adventist mission, praising the health care ministry exemplified by Kettering Medical Center and its network of hospitals near the location of the event. The church is to, “share the gospel in word and in deed.” He clearly does not agree with those who would narrow the mission of the church to include only evangelistic preaching and media.

The GC president appealed for support in the major strategic initiatives voted at the recent Annual Council. “I appeal to you in Ohio, with several large cities, to join the Mission to the Cities initiative. Especially encourage young people to get involved.” He also urged every individual to join in a Bible reading plan to be launched in the spring by reading one chapter a day, referring to Ellen White’s
statement in Acts of the Apostles (page 475) that, “in every generation and in every land the true foundation for character building has been the same — the principles contained in the word of God.” She recommends “the truth of God [as] the subject for contemplation and meditation,” and encourages each believer to, “regard the Bible as the voice of God speaking directly to him.”

He noted that he was speaking on October 22, a full 167 years after the day on which the founders of the modern Adventist movement believed that Jesus would return, but his emphasis was on hope and looking forward to the coming Kingdom. He led the congregation in singing, “We Have This Hope,” the signature Adventist hymn.

He carefully nuanced some of the things that he has been quoted as saying with comments both pro and con in the last year. “We are all free to read other Christian authors,” he stated twice while affirming the writings of Ellen White. “The Bible is the final authority, make no mistake.” He reiterated his concern about “mystical” ideas and practices and the “emerging church,” but went out of his way to be clear that “a wide variety of approaches” are needed in the mission of the church, including “many more methods yet to be initiated.”

He said, “we can learn from other Christians,” and made it clear that his expressed concern about inviting non-Adventist speakers is “not talking about community service events to which civic leaders are invited” or “educational lectures” in which outside speakers share “technical or professional knowledge that we can use.” His concern, he said, is about “major presentations of spiritual or theological messages.”

One retired Adventist worker at the Ohio event suggested that many of those who have been quick to apply Wilson’s comments to various things they are against in North America are ignorant of developments many places in the world which are more likely the focus of his concern. The simple fact that the GC president came to the Ohio Conference event is body language that indicates he may be considerably less reactionary in his attitudes than some think.

Pastor Wilson took a balanced position on the topic of missional innovation. He quoted 1 Corinthians 9:19-21 and Ellen White’s comment on this passage in Testimonies for the Church, Volume 6 (page 476), and summarized, “we must look for every possible opportunity...make every effort possible to reach postmodern people...yet remain ever mindful that our creative initiatives must be based on biblical principles.”

Some attendees were surprised to see Pastor Wilson on the same platform with Pastor Liu because he recently opposed the request of the North American Division and the Trans European Division for a ‘variance’ from the GC Working Policy, which prohibits women from being conference or union presidents. He has reportedly opposed the ordination of women pastors, although he has evidently accepted the actions of the church in China. He announced at the recent annual meeting of the GC committee, and mentioned again at the Ohio event, that he is going to China next spring to meet with church leaders there. He clearly intends to affirm the progress the Adventist Church is making in China.

The Ohio Conference, like all of the denominational units in the ‘Rust Belt,’ the old industrial region of the U.S. that extends from Pittsburgh to Chicago, has struggled for decades with no growth. It has a higher than average percentage of recently-baptized members, but also suffers from higher percentages of dropouts and people moving away. The only exception to this flat growth pattern has been in the Regional Conferences, with a largely African American constituency, although more recently the growth rate in these conferences has also declined.
Events like ‘Acts 11’ help to encourage the people attending small churches and working in complex metropolitan areas, to refocus on the larger mission and fabric of the Adventist movement. This event was strongly Christ-centered and in the grace-oriented corporate culture of the Ohio Conference. Contemporary music boomed across the parking lot from a tent where youth services were held parallel to the adult gathering. A children’s church met in the morning in a side room. Families enjoyed box lunches together at noon. A group of pastors, conference staff and lay members from across the state provided Bluegrass Christian music and the orchestra from the Kettering Church performed. “My cup runneth over,” smiled one senior citizen as he headed for his car in late afternoon.

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Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Let's celebrate the day EGW got her first vision, or the most famous vision of all--the one Edson "saw" in the cornfield. That is the major vision from which Adventism constructed its entire sanctuary doctrine. Is that less important than the completion of one of the many EGW books? Will there be successive celebrations for each of her many compilations, also?

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Gailon Arthur Joy 3 days ago

There is little question that we would do well to celebrate and recognize the SDA Legacy and Heritage and renew our Foundations of Faith to prepare for the trials dead ahead and it is nice to know that down deep inside, even you recognize the essence of this most urgent need.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
As a consequence of the changes in Roman Catholic polity and forms of worship that were brought about as the result of the Vatican II Council, there was an upsurge in the number of Roman Catholic dissident groups. Some of these groups accused Catholic Church authorities, including all of the Popes since Pope John XXIII, as being heretics as defined by Roman Catholic canon law. As a consequence, since Vatican II, there have been several Roman Catholic groups which have declared that the office of the Pope vacant and several have 'elected' others to that office thus creating a number of modern “anti-Popes.”

One of these dissident groups gathered around a former French Roman Catholic archbishop, Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991). In 1988, when Lefebvre consecrated four bishops against the express prohibition of Pope John Paul II, Lefebvre was excommunicated. On October 20, 2011, a member of the Roman Catholic clergy who is a supporter of Lefebvre held a press conference to make the following statement in conjunction with an upcoming ecumenical meeting in Assisi, Italy. The first meeting in Assisi was organized by John Paul II as a World Day of Prayer for Peace. The third meeting, Assisi III, will be attended by Pope Benedict XVI as well as the representatives of many other religions bodies both Christian and non-Christian:

Here is the statement by the supporter of Lefebvre:

“I declare, with the blessing of ten Catholic Bishops, that the ecumenical gathering in Assisi on October 27, 2011, is a crime that offends the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1. God is One and has revealed one religion only, not sixty.

2. The constant teaching of the Popes, most recently Pius XI [Pope 1922-1939] in his encyclical Mortalium Animos where he states that those who promote such meetings 'completely abandon the religion revealed by God'.

3. Ecumenism is a violation of human nature in its most noble part, the spirit. Instead of bringing souls to Jesus, Benedict XVI strengthens those who wander in error away from Christ, as he leads his own sheep to false religions and on to Satan. As Holy Scripture in Psalm 95 says, “All the gods of the nations are demons.”

   The consequence is complete spiritual and religious disorientation, a situation that favors discord instead of peace in Jesus Christ. Benedict XVI does not propose Jesus Christ as the Unique Peacemaker in the world, but proposes rather the United Nations for that role.

4. Canonical law at Canon 1258 prohibits any active participation in a non-Catholic rite.

5. As Bishop Pivarunas recently said, "It's incomprehensible that someone could claim to be the head of the Church, the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ and blatantly disregard the First Commandment."

For these five reasons I agree with the words of Bishop Lefebvre when he said in Econe [France] on Easter Sunday, 1986: “Is the Pope still pope, if he is heretical?...(If we do not talk about it) to our
faithful…they will lose faith…”

And on September 4, 1987 he said: “Rome lost the faith, dear friends, Rome is in apostasy…We cannot trust these people anymore. They have left the Church…”

“I am a simple priest. I do not declare that Benedict XVI be removed from his papacy. Not even Mgr. Lefebvre formally made this assertion. But I assert with the Bishops and priests I have visited, and the faithful, can assert it too, that it is not possible to recognize the hierarchy of the modern Church as legitimate without endangering one's own Faith. And without Faith we cannot be redeemed.”

Comment
It appears that conservative Catholics and conservative Adventists share certain views. Both groups are deeply suspicious of ecumenical dialogue, believe there is only one revealed true religion (the one they espouse), and agree that the Pope is leading people into error. We live in interesting times.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago

If you think we live in interesting times now, allow me to quote the great Al Jolson (or was it Bachman Turner Overdrive?), “you ain’t seen nothing yet!”

The intellectual/philosophical/theological descendants of the RCC right and the SDA right appear more likely to come into conflict with each other than the respective leftward counterparts of each.

Joe Erwin 1 week ago

Ervin, perhaps you remember a course in "Social Psychology" at PUC (we might even have been in the same class) in which the professor (whose name I have forgotten), administered a psychometric instrument designed to measure "F" (for "fascism"). This was the scale used for much research centered on "The Authoritarian Personality." I remember that most members of the class scored as very "authoritarian," and that the professor informed us that that result was typical of SDAs AND Catholics. More recent research identifies "Right-wing Authoritarianism" as a term for the most reliable cluster of "F" characteristics. I think there is little doubt that some substantial subset of SDAs and Catholics still score similarly on that scale, even though they may be absolutely intolerant of one another. Perhaps others here can guess why that is so, and perhaps also speculate about why other Catholics and adventists (and others) are relatively more "tolerant of ambiguity" and of each other.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

The test can be found:

http://www.anesi.com/fscale.htm

Nathan Schilt 1 week ago
As an informative piece on internal conflicts in the Catholic Church, this blog is really interesting, Erv. But using it as a springboard to pursue your jihad of intellectual bullying against conservative fundamentalists is really beneath you. I'm sure there is no end of disparaging comparisons, insinuations and innuendoes that you can substitute for actual engagement on real issues. It is amusing how blind you and your choir are to the reality that those whose religion is science and reason also only believe in one religion, are deeply suspicious of ecumenical dialogue, and agree that Ted Wilson is leading people into error. Does that mean you too share certain views with conservative Catholics?

Would there be any point in cataloguing the similarities between atheists, communists, fascists, etc., and liberal Adventists? I don't think so. Such an ad hominem exercise would certainly produce points of comparison, but would be intellectually dishonest, and a lazy substitute for critical thought. Can't we elevate the dialogue on AToday above this level?

Doctorf 4 days ago

Nate what is the basis for such statements as "jihad of intellectual bullying..."? This is a discussion. Erv draws a parallel between conservative catholics who view that there only "one christian church", the Catholic Church and any ecumenical outreach to other Christians is heresy. Thus, conservative Catholics are much like SDA conservatives, espousing one "true church" the SDA church. I was taught such, that the SDA church is gods latter day church and the standard bearer of "true" Christianity. The argument placed forward by SDA or Catholic conservatives is nonsense. They "declare" themselves the true Christians. Thus, it is true because they say it is true. Much like the Bible is gods word because the Church deems it so and uses the self ascribed authority of the bible to buttress its claims. What a classic example of circular reasoning.

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

Mr. Schilt, If it wasn't for your name in the post above, I would have thought I wrote it! lol 😊.

Ervin Taylor 1 week ago

I would think that my good colleague Nate would wish to think twice (perhaps even three or four times) about expressing the same opinion as Mr. Hammond. But Nate might think this was an ad hominem statement, so I will not make it. I must admit that Nate does have a way with words, very much as does my good friend Cliff Goldstein. (Opps, there I go again with ad hominem statements) For example, "jihad of intellectual bullying against conservative fundamentlists" I wish I could come up with such high sounding phrases.

However, what I would really like to do is to try to "catalogue the similarities between atheists, communists, fascists, etc. and liberal Adventists." Hmm. I'm having some trouble in doing that and so I wonder if Nate could help me?

If Nate can not immediately see the similarity between conservative Adventists and conservative Catholics, which has been pointed out many, many times, by many, many people, then I must wonder about how he makes any comparisons. But here I am making an ad hominem statement.
again and Nate want's me to stop that. Well, I will just have to go off into my little, dark, corner and work on that character defect.

Erv, there is a sometimes fine, but nonetheless clear line between using analogies or comparisons as a common point of reference to support an argument, and using such tools as tactics to stigmatize one's opponents and demagogue a conclusion. The latter is what protesters do when they carry signs painted with slogans and epithets.

You seek to marginalize SDA conservatives by dressing them in offensive garb, thereby hoping your own extremist views will appear as mainstream and moderate. These tactics are straight out of Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* where, under the rubric of "Power Tactics" - Rule 13 - he advocates: "pick your target; freeze it; personalize it." This happens all the time in the political arena. I am just disappointed that some find it attractive to stoop to that level on this website.

Your preference for "us vs. them" identity group warfare is underscored by your suggestion that I should be embarrassed by Trevor's Hammond's endorsement. Intimidating others from rallying to the defense of your target is another Alinskyite tactic. It makes you sound like a high schooler trying to protect the boundaries of a clique. There is no shame in identifying and condemning moral and intellectual bullying, even one may not share the beliefs and worldview of the object of scorn.

I wish to edit my statement above:

Mr. Schilt, If it wasn't for your name in the post above, I would have thought I wrote it! lol 😄.

I should be:
Mr. Schilt, If it wasn't for your name in the post above, I would have WISHED I wrote it! lol 😄.

In Mr. Schilt's comment above, I particularly like the phrase *"It is amusing how blind you and your choir are"* which he uses when addressing the blog writer.

♥I

So some of Lefebvre's associates are still huffing and puffing, despite the fact that, in the last few years, the Vatican has been bending over backwards to reconcile with the SSPX (as one result of those conversations, any priest who wishes to can celebrate mass using the 1962 without the need to get his bishop's permission).

The differences between them and the Catholic church are not as great as might appear. The
Catholic Church believes it alone as the fullness of the Christian faith. It accepts the Eastern Orthodox churches as "churches" in the full sense, because they have valid (in Roman eyes) ministerial ordinations and sacraments. It regards all Protestant bodies as mere "ecclesial communities," that are not "churches" as Rome defines them. It does not accept Protestant ordinations as valid. It does not allow intercommunion with Protestants. Vatican 2 presented a "kinder, gentler" face of the Catholic beliefs, but didn't change them.

Vatican 2 DID, however, radically change the way Catholics speak about Protestantism ("separated brethren," who have a valid baptism, and thus have a real, if imperfect, connection to the Catholic Church). And it more radically changed the way Catholicism regards Judaism (gone are the references to "perfidious Jews," and explicit statements of supercessionism and blood guilt). The SSPX has been very vitriolic in its condemnation of these changes. At an SSPX bookstore in Houston, I have found copies of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and Henry Ford's diatribe based on it, "The International Jew." Bishop Williamson of the SSPX has gotten himself embarrassed because of statements he has made about the Jews.

As to the Assisi meetings, Benedict XVI was never comfortable with some things John Paul II did. Thus the third meeting is a common "pilgrimage," but there will be no joint prayers, so as not to give the wrong impression (http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/?p=15680).

But that's not enough to satisfy the reactionary fringe, or the conspiracy buffs of many churches.

Michelle Stevens 6 days ago

I'm going to have to agree with Mr Schilt's perspective on this discourse. There is not a conspiracy around every corner, and analogies are often too easy, too loose, and inaccurate. An analysis of the actual issues one disagrees with seems like a much more worthwhile and intellectually honest exercise.

M

JaNe 5 days ago

Why are you an SDA? If no one has the "truth", and if you openly reject the Word of God in Genesis and in turn espouse atheistic views, and prefer to inject worldly political inuendos on a website that uses the name "Adventist" on it, then why are you wasting time as an SDA?

Joe Erwin 4 days ago

The comment above was not directed to me, but was apparently aimed at the originator of this blog. When one disagrees with aspects of dogma or policy of a group of which one is a member, one may abandon the group or one may stay in the group. If one stays in the group, s/he can be silent or challenge the tenets or policies one disagrees with. People who are adventists may stay or leave for various reasons. For some, family ties with lifelong and sometimes multigenerational adventists create a culture that is not easily discarded--nor should it be. When one finds that s/he can no longer believe everything exactly as one was taught in adventist families and schools, why
should the church and its members be so rigid as to reject that individual? Wouldn't it be more consistent to allow diversity to exist than to shun anyone who deviates from the dogma? It seems to me that the SDA dogma is too brittle and that many members are intolerant of individual differences that are none of their business.

On one side of my family, the grandparents were adventists and on the other side the great-grandparents were. Clearly, my siblings and I were reared in SDA culture. But today, none of us, nor any of our children, are adventists. All of us attended academies. Two of us attended SDA colleges. Two of us were theology majors. Two of us taught in SDA elementary schools. Two of the three of us are Christians (one Catholic, one Assemblies of God), and the other one (me) is a "nonbeliever" (which does not necessarily mean that I am an atheist--although I am pretty close to being an atheist, I just don't think it is anyone's business what I think about God, and I have no interest in "converting" anyone to atheism).

There really is no place for me in the church. I accept that. But for those who have remained in the church, even though their minds are open to ideas beyond the rigid dogma of the church, I must admire their courage and fortitude, although it may well be a waste of their time and talent. It is a little sad that so many in the church are so intolerant of ambiguity and diversity. No one needs to point out who those people are. They readily self-identify.

Doctorf 4 days ago

Joe,

Very interesting and enlightening post. Many, whether Catholic, Jewish, SDA etc could not get away from their religion if they tried because of the generational ties with family that have been indoctrinated under one of the above banners. Like you I can't get away from SDA culture if I tried. Its everywhere. My neighbors, plethora of friends and my family throughout 5 generations.

Nathan Schilt 4 days ago

Joe, you left out a third option: The group can decide to expel the member. I think that's what a lot of fundamentalists think should happen to those who challenge group norms. They represent a minority fringe. I think even most Adventists who conform to traditional standards and beliefs would not agree with JaNe.

Having said that, I don't think membership or equal access to church offices is an entitlement that comes with having been born or baptized into the church. The institutional church qua denomination is really a collection of religious clubs, each of which has considerable de facto flexibility in deciding what standards are important, as well as who's in and who's out. When my parents got divorced back in the mid-50's, my father was excommunicated from the local SDA church. But he moved to Silver Springs, Md., where a small Adventist church immediately accepted him and his new wife on profession of faith.

If you came to a university SDA community and joined an Adventist fellowship such as Erv attends, you would no doubt find it highly stimulating and be welcomed with open arms. I personally like diversity within my church, but I certainly don't think it's a moral imperative. Nor would I want to force it on an Adventist community that had a very fundamentalistic sense of identity and mission. If they want to limit their group to folks who will annually commit to the 28 fundamental beliefs and pay a double tithe, isn't that their prerogative?
How many professional societies and mission driven charities have specific standards that must be met in order to remain a member in good standing? Isn't the right of a private society, be it a church, a school, or a club, to be narrow-minded and inconsistent? I don't think that's sad; it's a cause for celebration. Is it sad that Luther parted company with the Roman Catholic Church or that we have so many denominations? Certainly not! The roots of religious liberty grew out of diverse religious beliefs that were mutually intolerant.

Until the reactionary forces in the church persuade some centralized authority to assume the prerogatives of establishing and enforcing criteria for church membership, those who want to silence voices like yours, Doctorfs, Ervs, and maybe even me, once they've gotten rid of you, will be spitting (or something like that) into the wind. In the meantime, I don't mind letting them have their own sandboxes.

Nathan Schilt 4 days ago

Allow me to add, Joe, that I don't think it takes courage and fortitude to stay. It takes courage and fortitude to strike out and find like-minded people to advance a vision and mission that is being stifled by internal quarreling and power struggles. IMO, most malcontents who stay in the church do so because they either just like to fight or they are dependent on the church for employment.

Elaine Nelson 4 days ago

The Church of Intolerance if able to expel all those it finds do not meet their particular standards would, after getting rid of all such heretics, turn and start cannibalizing their own. Those who crave exclusivity will soon have it all alone with no one able to meet their standards.

Kevin Riley 4 days ago

The SDA church is an ideological organisation - therefore it is defined by belief, just like any other religious or political organisation. Beliefs are central, but how many beliefs, and how specific, is up to the group. We are not more or less a religious organisation because we have replaced the pioneers' 2 principles (keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus) by 28 fundamentals. My preference is to keep the defining statements general and as brief as possible (7, 10, or 12 strike me as a good Biblical numbers to aim for) so we can include as many people as possible without destroying our identity and mission. But should we decide to have 144,000 fundamental beliefs, we would still be just as much defined by our beliefs as when we had just a handful.

Joe Erwin 4 days ago

Nathan, thanks for your interesting and thoughtful words. There is an interesting coincidence. My parents divorced in the 1950s. Mom was a teacher in an SDA school. Dad was thrown out of the church. While it may have simply been a matter of church officers siding with Mom, Dad always said he was thrown out for training race horses. Even later in life the two of them disagreed on the cause of the divorce. My best guess is that money problems associated with a devastating
automobile accident was the critical factor. Anyway, some years later, he married a devout Irish Catholic woman. He remained a Christian, but without a church. He made it clear that he did not ever understand why the church had abandoned him or why God had allowed so many terrible things to happen to him. Sadly, for him, he harbored much bitterness and regret. So, yes, one can be expelled.

My sister wanted to be an SDA minister, and excelled in all the coursework that would have qualified her to go to the seminary, but she was denied entry and support because she was a woman. So, she entered Officer Candidate School in the Air Force, married an Air Force Officer, and went back to school for an MLS from a good public college. She became an episcopalian, and later a Catholic. My brother dropped out of academy after two years and never went back. He went into the Air Force married a baptist girl and after an ugly divorce married another baptist girl. Together, they got more and more involved with charismatic pentacostal congregations, especially so after his oldest daughter was murdered by her estranged pentacostal preacher husband. Strange stuff. Our parents are dead. All but one of the aunts and uncles have died. Only one cousin remains in the church.

My first wife was a life long adventist. That marriage did not last long. I have been married to my 2nd wife for 38 years. She was baptised as an infant (episcopalian), but she is not religious, which suits me fine. She is a good person, caring, moral, ethical, honest, and I'm fortunate to have found someone to put up with me.

So, I do not feel that I live in the midst of many adventists. I do go back for academy reunions sometimes, and most of my friends who remained in the church are nice people--as are those who did not. Other than that, I haven't been in an adventist church for more than 35 years, and I really do not miss it much. I do agree that organizations have the right to set and enforce standards. Also, it is clear to me that I do not believe much of what SDAs believe, whether there are 2 or 28 principles.

Even so, I am strangely fascinated with what keeps people in the church and how anyone can stay. So, these conversations help me understand, a little. Thank you are for sharing your perspectives.

Nathan Schilt 3 days ago

This is really interesting, Joe. I would have to say that the same things that kept me in the Church were what caused you to "drift" away - community and family. My intellectual doubts about church beliefs have been trumped by wonderful people committed to Adventism who have blessed my life enormously with their integrity and honesty - my mother, a brother, college professors, thoughtful church communities, and commitment to building faith in my kids.

I don't think God is calling everyone to be an Adventist. But I do think He is calling everyone to relationship with Him in some community of faith. Because I believe He has called me through my life, associations and worldview to Adventism, I need to be faithful to that call, and love what He has called me to, until I hear Him calling me to something else.

My daughter used to ask, "Why be an Adventist? Why not a Buddhist, Hindu, or Catholic?" I told her that she needed to find out what God was calling her to and be faithful to that call. What is wrong headed, in my opinion, is using God's revelation to others, through different faith windows, to remain detached - to relativize, invalidate, or nullify His revelation or call in one's own life.
I have many intellectual reasons for believing in the superiority of God's revelation and incarnation revealed in the Bible. But I know that those reasons would not have been sufficient without flesh and blood Christian SDAs whose love and dedication was palpable in my life. I can't speak for others or universalize God's call. But because I believe He has revealed Himself to me through Jesus Christ, I will not put my soul at peril by relativizing or rationalizing away His call on my life. Besides, I have found life with Him in my SDA faith garden to be pure joy. That, together with the fact that God doesn't seem to be calling me into a different faith community, is what keeps me in the Church.

Trevor Hammond 4 days ago

The reason why there is a perceived 'right wing' within Adventism is because some radicals have decided to move left. Although I admit there are extremists on both sides, the left have erroneously included all of Traditional Adventism as right wing extremists which exposes their own extremist views.

IN MY OPINION - from the way I see things...
They (the Adventist left) lean heavily towards:

- death before sin which is contrary to what the Bible teaches
- wholesale evolutionary belief or a mutated form called theistic evolution
- similar understanding to the way right wing Catholics view the Bible: Catholics say tradition over the Bible, and the Adventist left says Culture and socio-politics over the Bible
- limited inspiration and authority of the Holy Bible
- blatant disregard of Ellen White writings
- accepting homosexual relationships as an alternative, based on socio-political trends, as an equal to a Biblical understanding of marriage
- The 'dess mess' die hard's who still cling to manmade doctrine by making one text and one man bigger than the whole Bible
- the ten commandments are ten options
- the Sabbath is not important and Sunday sacredness is just as good enough
- cheap grace is ok and obedience to God is unimportant, legalistic and not necessary
- that the Advent message to all the world is just a means of increasing numbers by gaining converts who aren't able to think as smartly as those in educated western culture countries
- secular education is the key to spiritual enlightenment NOT the word of God
- the word of God is NOT the word of God
- Jesus was understandably wrong about the Flood and Creation because he only was able to understand and believe what his culture taught him which was limited knowledge in itself
- there is no Judgement process or event which involves the 'cleansing of the sanctuary' or Investigative Judgement which started on 22 October 1844 as per 2300 year prophecy.
- humanism is a better 'way' than the gospel of Christ
- unity of believers in Christ is misrepresented as unity of sinfulness in Christ - aka cheap grace
- sin isn't the transgression of the law as there is no law in the new testament that is binding on the Christian Church. Seems traffic laws and contitutional laws are more important for the Adventist left wing
- many on the left like to 'portray' themselves as moderates but they are in fact extreme left. It is traditional Adventism that is in the moderate mainstream and have maintained this by not embracing extremist views which the left have undoubtedly subscribed and are 'in need of
The problem with your list is that it does not define a group of SDAs. It may reflect the beliefs of a few on the far left, but most people left-of-centre would not agree with most of what you say defines them. All you have done is list the things you do not like. Traditional Adventism, as it is usually defined, is not the centre. That position is held by conservative and evangelical SDAs, and if you are looking for where the majority of SDAs stand, that is where you should be looking. You have done just what you accuse the left of doing, you have included many conservative SDAs in your category of 'traditional SDA', and most would not want to be there. Most 'traditional SDAs' are found supporting the independent ministries, not the SDA church. Did you read the article on the SDA spectrum in the latest AToday magazine? It might help you understand why 'traditional Adventists' are viewed as the extreme right by most people.

AND YOUR POINT IS???

Fundamental Catholicism is hardly linked realistically to Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists that believe the literal Bible is the Foundation of Faith and look forward to a literal Second Coming to raise the Faithful and only the Faithful to Life Eternal. The belief that one is equivalent to the other is delusional and demonstrates how little some people know of the Truth as defined by the Biblical Message. The nullity thereof is eternal loss...a needless shame.

Gailon, I may get moderated for this, but have to ask are you the Gailon of save 3 abn fame?

Came across this while trying to see what drives your attitude here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3ABN#cite_note-10

Hey - cb25
Are you like snooping to 'dig up some dirt' on some of us? No need to Sir! Just ask and I'll tell you...
my dirt if you wish... I've got plenty. Don't we all?

♥T

cb25
3 days ago

Hi Trevor,

No. I was unimpressed with the attitude/tone of what Gailon writes, but intrigued by the AUReporter title, so combine these two points I tried to find out more. So, no, not snooping for dirt. Was suprised by what I found.

Elaine Nelson
3 days ago

cb25,

Isn't the internet amazing! Read most of the links and discovered a most interesting history. Does smug self-righteousness cover up a lot!

Joe Erwin
3 days ago

First, let me say that I am not trying to change anyone's mind, cause them to doubt their faith, or any of that stuff. I am just a former SDA who left the church and still am a serious, thoughtful, considerate, and, I hope, moral and ethical person. I recently wrote down a list of my beliefs, inspired, I suppose, by Trevor's list.

1. I believe that when one dies, one is dead. Period.
2. I believe that everyone is entitled to respect and due consideration.
3. I believe that due consideration requires objective knowledge and empathetic understanding.
4. I believe that science offers the most reliable, effective, and valid method of obtaining and evaluating objective evidence.
5. I believe that deities and religions and religious texts were created by humans in attempts to understand and explain the world and their experiences in it, and to manipulate and control others.
6. I believe that humans are animals (primates, mammals)--extraordinary animals, but really animals.
7. I believe the earth is very old (over a billion years old), and that the universe may have had no beginning and might have no end; and I believe that primate mammals have existed for more than 60 million years and that the common ancestor of chimpanzees and humans existed about 6 million years ago.
8. I believe that humans are ethically obligated to each other and other residents of our planet to
behave in constructive ways rather than cruel and destructive ways--this obligation exists simply because we have the ability to make such choices, not because any external force orders us to "be good."

9. I believe that people are profoundly diverse in terms of emotionality, cognitive abilities, and cultural experience, and that I have no right to condemn others for believing differently from myself--even so, there are limits to the extent that destructive patterns of behavior can be tolerated, especially if they impinge on the freedom of others.

So, to me, there is no hell and no heaven, and there is no original sin/"fall of man." We are not lost. We do not require salvation. There is no judgement, investigative or otherwise. "Life after death," to the extent that it exists, is through our biological progeny and our legacy of influence.

David Langworthy
2 days ago

Dear Joe Erwin,
As my first post on this site, I add my signature to your statement above. This is how I see it and where evidence has taken me. Well stated, Sir! Best wishes. dl

Ervin Taylor
2 days ago

Joe:

A first class summary. The nine points are well stated and make a lot of sense. Might I just raise a couple of possible provisos dealing with your last paragraph? That there is no original "Fall of Man" or no original sin in the classic sense of the word--that makes sense. I guess it is my agnostic gene kicking in when we talk about no "hell" and "heaven". I agree that the classic ideas about hell and heaven don't seem to work very well. But I'm not sure about enough to be able to be sure about the nature of ultimate reality, i.e., "life after death." If "something" exists "beyond," it certainly would not seem to include carbon based units. I would go with that. However, it seems to me that that is something beyond the human ability to work out with any degree of confidence. We just don't know.

Joe Erwin
2 days ago

David and Erv, thanks for your comments.

I agree with you, Erv, regarding the "not knowing" part. It is important that this list be viewed as a list of personal beliefs, not things I claim to be certain or absolute truth. "So, to me..." believing as I do, I have no confidence that heaven or hell exist, or even that there is any such thing as a "spiritual" dimension. I could be wrong. Many people disagree with me, and many don't.

Even though I think science provides the best methods of discovering and evaluating evidence, it is possible to imagine and believe all sorts of things outside the scope of science. You are correct, I believe, that we do not, and cannot, know for sure. I find that being unable to know for certain
strengthens my belief in alternatives to the unknowable.

Wishing you well....

Elaine Nelson  2 days ago

The ability to live with ambiguity about those things that we cannot possibly know: what happens after death; a god, or gods; and heaven or hell, is the evidence of a questioning mind; not the fundamentalist. These things cannot be known by objective discovery. They all are in the realm of metaphysical ideas and subject to different interpretations for the many varieties of people who have been taught from birth of ideas that they cherish just as those in a Judeo-Christian culture have very different interpretations of events.

Bill Cork  2 days ago

If we are going to give lists of what we believe or don't believe, count me as one who is happy to confess, with Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and many more through the ages:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
    the Maker of heaven and earth,
    and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
    born of the virgin Mary,
    suffered under Pontius Pilate,
    was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
The third day He arose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
    and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
    the holy catholic (universal) church;
    the communion of saints;
    the forgiveness of sins;
    the resurrection of the body;
    and the life everlasting.

Kevin Riley  2 days ago

Amen. Just thought it needed that ;)

Ervin Taylor  2 days ago

The Apostles Creed cited above contains 12 very short articles and 111 words. The Adventist "Fundamentals" (I will not call it a Creed to avoid arguments) contains 28 very long articles and
Edwin A. Schwisow

As an adolescent in an Adventist home, I was taught that Adventism as a belief system, culture, and mission was distinctive—unique and one-of-a-kind—and did not obey the sociological rules nor contain the range of thought or practice characteristic of secular or "fallen" church organizations. I heard about the various grades of Catholics, and chalked the diversity up to Catholicism's lengthy sojourn in the land of spiritual Shinar; I noted the varieties of Judaism and identified those variants as weaknesses associated with Judaism's rejection of Christ; I grasped the range of thought within our major political parties and associated the diversity with inconstancies of human beings not unified by a fundamental adherence to unassailable Truth, as I believed it was in Adventism. As a youngster this is the way I saw things. As I read and studied through high school and college, however, I began to notice that ALL organizations follow certain classical patterns of diversity and ritual struggle, including Adventism.

The sooner we recognize how SIMILAR our patterns of sociologically driven interaction are to other groups of like complexity and breadth of thought, the more readily we will be able to identify true aberrations within our community of faith. Today I recognize that it is possible to have a wonderful Christian experience at pretty much all points in the left-to-right range in Adventism—conservative, liberal, and a thousand points of light in-between. The normal, ritual controversies within our organization seem to get out of hand, however, when a person or people determines that theirs is the ideal representation of what it means to be a member of the organization, and seeks to shame, pressure, bribe, cajole, or argue others to join them at that particular locus on the continuum.

As we observe other organizations and note the classic similarities between their interaction and ours, we will begin to accept at least in theory that it's natural to have these kinds of conversations within any vibrant, living organization such as the Adventist Church.

Nathan Schilt

As I get older I am less and less interested in what people claim to believe. How many wars have been waged in the name of love and peace? Liberte, egalite, fraternite! The Goddess of Reason! Workers of the world, unite! How did those beliefs work out? I would rather ask the question: "What is your passion?" Once I see what your passion is and how that impacts the way you live, I will have a much easier time knowing and understanding your beliefs. Professed beliefs are simply the clothes we wear to impress ourselves or a desired audience. They are usually a very poor metric of who we are or how others experience us.

As Ed alludes to, we have morphed as a church - at least in North America and Canada - into something quite different from our professed beliefs and historical subculture. The reality of who we are is so out of phase with the vision and mission proclaimed from headquarters that we are no longer a "body of believers." The landscape of Adventism looks like the land of "Judges" where everyone sees their beliefs and behavior as acceptable, if not normative, for the Church. The tremors we have encountered as a Church are, IMHO, the result of slippage in the alignment of the tectonic plates of Adventism. Whether that's good or bad kind of depends on whether they will continue to shift, where you live, and where you want to be a hundred years from now. The path of liberal Protestantism, which seems to be the route progressives prefer, looks more like a refuge for
endangered species than an entre to vibrant spiritual ecosystems.

Joe Erwin 1 day ago

Your point is well taken, Nathan. I know it was not especially directed at me (it isn't all about me), but I thought perhaps I should mention my passion, which certainly is represented in that list I posted above.

As the son of an elementary school teacher, and a teacher myself (in a one-room SDA school when I was 19), I became fascinated with how people learn. Growing up on a ranch, training dogs and working with my Dad to train horses, my interest in learning, training, and teaching extended beyond humans to all sorts of animals. While I was studying to become a counseling psychologist and psychometrist at University of the Pacific, I discovered comparative and experimental psychology and zoological and psychological studies of animal behavior. After studying a variety of animals from flies and fish and birds to mice and rats, I had an opportunity to study social development of nonhuman primates (while continuing to study normal and abnormal development and learning disabilities in humans). I got stuck on studying human and nonhuman primates, sometimes with direct comparisons. While in graduate school, I found primatology served as a broad interdisciplinary field that touched on anthropology, psychology, genetics, zoology, ecology, health, neurobiology, etc. After several books regarding primates, including a series called *Comparative Primate Biology*, and most recently *Aging in Primates*, I'm thinking (at age 70) of writing an autobiography, probably to be called *A Passion for Primates*. This passion has served me well, taking me to wonderful remote places around the world, and providing a vocation as a zoological curator, field researcher, scientific editor (*National Geographic RESEARCH, and American Journal of Primatology*), and interdisciplinary research coordinator (e.g. of the Sulawesi Primate Project, and the Great Ape Aging Project).

Ervin Taylor 1 day ago

Nate suggests that whether one believes that "slippage . . . in the tectonic plates of Adventism" is good or bad depends in part where "you want to be a hundred years from now." Most (all?) of us reading this will be dead a hundred years from now so I'm not quite sure how that variable might work. Perhaps Nate can provide some commentary.

Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

IT is fair to say that none of us reading these comments will be around 100 years from now, so is that we should be completely uninterested? How many times have we read that what we do today in the global economic problems that our children and grandchildren will be saddled with the debts we incur today? Is there no concern for the future because we will: all be dead; in hell or heaven, and it really doesn't matter at all?

If that is the case, maybe we should close these blogs, close the church doors, and "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." I believe that's in the Bible.
Joe Erwin

1 day ago

It seems to me that life is too short to spend it agonizing over imaginary and unknowable dilemmas. The natural world is wonderfully complex, with plenty of challenges to learn about, experience, and grow into emergent knowledge and understanding. I like the "eat, drink, and be merry" attitude, in moderation, of course. Why not enjoy life and be happy instead of worrying excessively? And, actively addressing problems that one encounters, in constructive ways, itself brings joy and fulfilment. Hard work is even enjoyable (in moderation, of course). But why should we live immersed in an imaginary world when the real world is so interesting?

Nathan Schilt

22 hours ago

Of course that's the question, isn't it Joe? Was the world of Christ (The Kingdom) - the world which His followers often fecklessly try to illuminate and inhabit - simply an imaginary world? It is my conviction - and I presume the conviction of virtually all who patronize this website - that the answer to this question is no. The more we look at the real world, whether through the eyes of science, faith, or experience, the more we see evidence of a reality beyond. You too sense that reality beyond, but conclude that religious mythic understandings of that reality can and will, over time, be conquered by expanding human apprehension and analysis, just as they have in the past.

One of the paradoxes you will find in looking at those like me, who seek to be unapologetically and gratefully "immersed in an imaginary world," is that, for all our striving, perfectionism, judgmentalism, and pessimism about human nature, study after study shows us to be the most fulfilled, joyful, healthy, generous, and productive people in the world. And those, like you, who also share those qualities, without need or desire to live in an "imaginary world," are seldom more than one generation removed from those who cherished that "imaginary world" and instilled in you its values.

The "real world" is gambling that those value "genes" can be selectively removed from the "imaginary world," re-engineered, and inserted into "real world" genomes to pave the way for the imagined world of John Lennon. As evidence mounts that this is a really bad gamble, those who are emotionally and economically invested in denying the imaginary world of Christianity keep doubling down. We do indeed, as Erv says, live in interesting times.

Joe Erwin

19 hours ago

No, in fact, I do not sense a reality beyond. Quite the contrary. Across the years I have seen less-and-less evidence, and less-and-less need to hypothesize that there is anything "beyond." I have heard the argument that since we do not know about what is beyond, it makes more sense to "believe" than take the chance on burning in hell fire or missing out on heaven. Even when I was a "born again" Christian and true believer adventist, it seemed to me that heaven and hell were very much beside the point. Living a joyful and harmonious life seemed to me to be a sufficient reward in its own right. I'm afraid that "heaven" is for those whose life experiences have been characterized by suffering and deprivation and disappointment. And "hell," I'm confident, is something with which to threaten the children and others who are easily frightened. Perhaps my SDA rearing with the concept of the whole person (no disembodied souls or spirits) has made the notion of a permanent death easier for me to accept. To me, a permanent death is a motivator to make the best possible use of the present life, both to live fully and be constructive. I do not see...
this as a gamble at all.

Nice reference to John Lennon's "Imagine." I am, to some degree, a product of the '40s, '50s, '60s, etc. I was sort of on the edge of hippie-dom, living, as I did then, mostly in northern and central California. As I see it, the mounting evidence is that living in the imaginary world of religion is the tragic waste of time and energy. But, I would not expect those who have made that choice to agree with me or change their minds. As I keep saying, if you can believe, by all means do so; but if one cannot HONESTLY believe, rather than just hedging one's bets, one can make the choice to live a life grounded honestly in tangible empirical evidence, with all the tolerance of ambiguity that requires, rather than to live in a world of rationalization to force evidence into one's artificial cognitive template. I'm sounding intolerant, and I do not wish to be. "Value genes?" In what world does that make any sense at all? I guess I should quit lurking here. It is quite clear that I no longer have any place in or around the church. It would be inconsistent to suggest that others are wasting their time if I participate with them in the process of endless hand-wringing.

Nathan Schilt

I miscommunicated, Joe, when I said that you too believe in a "reality beyond". What I meant is that you too see and understand the limits in humanity's present ability to apprehend and understand your "real world". You too surely appreciate the paradox that increased learning seems to exponentially expand the scope of human confusion and foolishness. Knowledge and understanding is like a receding, expanding universe that, as we see it more clearly, remains as elusive today in its totality as it was 1,000 years ago. When you see that reality "beyond" you conclude that it simply represents new frontiers in your "real world" that will eventually be settled by future pioneers of the real world, rather than a divine realm that should be posted with artificial religious boundary markers. I, on the other hand see a path with signposts to an eternity that has created me, touched me, and entered my "real world" to guide me to a world beyond.

I accept the negative associations and experiences you have had with SDA Christianity. But I wonder why so many who reject Christianity, like Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, need to demonize "believers and their beliefs in order to reject Christianity. Ptomaine poisoning doesn't invalidate the reality of what the gourmand experiences. The scientific fraud perpetrated by Phil Jones, Michael Mann, and Co. doesn't lead me to reject the validity of paleoclimatology as a discipline, much less science as an epistemological pathway. Nor does it lead me to reject the notion that CO2 plays a role in climate change.

Many deeply committed Christians agree with you about the nefarious use of Heaven and Hell in Christian teaching. Many, if not most, Christians also share much in common with you about what is good, true, and beautiful. Why judge them by the fringes of the garments they wear? Wouldn't it make more sense to attack Christ Himself? If only you could invalidate that part of the "real world," then it might be easier to reject the world beyond, without which the reality of His life and death would be incomprehensible.

cb25

Nathan,

Not commenting for Joe, (I appreciate much of what he writes).
But imho you have hit a significant nail "almost" on the head. I have been thinking its about time for a blog on blending the two "extremes" that emerge here. (extreme depends from where one is "looking")

C.S Lewis:

“If ever a myth had become a fact, had been incarnated, it would be just like this. And nothing else in all literature was just like this. Myths were like it in one way. Histories were like it in another. But nothing was simply like it... Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact; the Word, flesh; God, man. This is not "a religion," nor "a philosophy." It is the summing up and actuality of them all.”

You say: "The more we look at the real world, whether through the eyes of science, faith, or experience, the more we see evidence of a reality beyond."

As I have noted before, an apologetic for faith should be based on what "is", not on what "we don't know" (God of gaps). It is my conviction that the things we see through those things you speak of are part of "what is". Rather than being "conquered, they will in fact become more confirmed.

Why do I argue so strongly against the YEC, absolute authority of Bible etc? Because the very things noted which point to evidence of a reality beyond also highlight other things within reality that don't measure up with the Bible's more concrete assertions about this reality in which we live. eg old earth vs young earth; special creation vs process creation, and the like.

I still think we need an apologetic which can hold "all" these realities together.

---

J. David Newman 19 hours ago

Joe:

Thank you for being so candid with your nine points. It intrigues me that you want to spend time on a site that is the very opposite of your fundamental beliefs. However, I wish to comment on your point: "I believe the earth is very old (over a billion years old), and that the universe may have had no beginning and might have no end;"

That is a faith statement. When I say I believe there is a God that is also a faith statement. You cannot prove there is no God. I cannot prove there is a God. Despite the criticisms of Pascal's Wager (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal%27s_Wager) I still believe it makes more sense to believe there is a God and something beyond than not to believe. As Pascal eloquently says those who bet that there is no God will feel very differently if they find there is a God at the end of time. Whereas if there is no God none of us will ever know.

So the big question is still there: How do we decide what faith statements to make since you and I both live by faith when it comes to ultimate reality?

---

Elaine Nelson 17 hours ago

Thank you for being so candid with your nine points. It intrigues me that you want to spend time on a site that is the very opposite of your fundamental beliefs. However, I wish to comment on your point: "I believe the earth is very old (over a billion years old), and that the universe may have had no beginning and might have no end;"

That is a faith statement. When I say I believe there is a God that is also a faith statement. You cannot prove there is no God. I cannot prove there is a God. Despite the criticisms of Pascal's Wager (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pascal%27s_Wager) I still believe it makes more sense to believe there is a God and something beyond than not to believe. As Pascal eloquently says those who bet that there is no God will feel very differently if they find there is a God at the end of time. Whereas if there is no God none of us will ever know.

So the big question is still there: How do we decide what faith statements to make since you and I both live by faith when it comes to ultimate reality?
Pascal's Wager has been used often but it still makes little difference to many. If there is a god, why should that bother those of us who never believed it? Surprises are abundant in our lives today. OTOH, if there is no god, no problem at all. Either way, no loss either way. If, as some religionists claim, that those who do not believe in a god will be lost anyway, we have lost nothing; and if there is a god and he damned us to hell for not believing, who would want to live with such an ogre?

cb25 16 hours ago

Joe,

I for one think you do have a place here...you make many excellent points. Seems to me, among other things, what you say has value in "shocking" some here into awareness that many issues are not easily poked into boxes and labeled "done". Whatever ones perspective there are many loose ends.

Hang around! Hey, I'm not quite where you are, but most would assume I have no place here either!

Cheers

J. David Newman 13 hours ago

Joe and cb25, yes please continue to contribute. You really help me to think through again what and why I believe. What fascinates me is that ultimately whether it is Joe or Chris or Elaine or Ron or David we all live by faith when it comes to ultimate realities. The question is simply which faith is most reasonable. When I compare my faith with the faith of the atheist I believe that it takes more faith to believe that life and thinking beings could come from non life and non thinking than to believe that a thinking being originated all of this.

David Langworthy 7 hours ago

J. David,
"we all live by faith when it comes to ultimate realities......"

Dealing with ultimate realities is an abstraction. Lets deal with the reality of hear and now. Say you have a suspicious color on your skin and your Dr takes a biopsy. Do you want a Pathologist to look a the biopsy and give a diagnosis by faith, or by his having seen 1000 cases of malignant melanoma and 10000 benign biopsies? Say its cancer. Do you want your surgeon doing a wide excision and regional lymph node excision by faith, or by the best scientific practice model? Say you need chemotherapy and your Oncologist orders chemotherapy. Do you want the nurse to read the order and select the drug by faith, or by rigorous training and standards of care? Say the Nurse needs to start an IV and a bottle of IV fluid in order to give the drug. Should she pick the IV fluid by faith, or should she get the bottle produced by a manufacturer who is held to strict standards of sterility and electrolyte content? Say the hospital room you are in has been cleaned by a house keeping employee who is happy to have their first job. Should they clean your bed and care area by faith, or by strict training through a century of knowledge from lives lost through improper disinfection technique?
We can have 'faith' in the 'ultimate reality' of our choosing. But in this reality science is where the rubber meets the road. This is the reality in which I live.
Respectfully, dl

Elaine Nelson 12 hours ago
Perhaps believing in a god is not too difficult. It is in claiming how he acts, what he does, what his actions are, or are not, whether he causes events or whether he has "hands off," and more.

This is why George Bernard Shaw said that "God created man and man has ever since returned the favor." Haven't men always created their own gods? All religions claim many things for their gods. Doesn't one's birth have far more affect on determining which god he worships and which religion he has rather than anything else? How much is really our free choice?

David Read 10 hours ago
It is premature to compare conservative Adventists to SSPX Catholics, but sometimes, especially after reading too much Spectrum, it can seem like that's where we are headed.

cb25 9 hours ago
David Newman,

Thanks for the comment re helping one another to think things through.

:) In my typical fashion I am going to draw attention to a point you made, because, perhaps in your typical fashion, you have bounced off an extreme position to compare yours.

Here's your point: "The question is simply which faith is most reasonable. When I compare my faith with the faith of the atheist I believe that it takes more faith to believe that life and thinking beings could come from non life and non thinking than to believe that a thinking being originated all of this."

When faith is viewed from a Christian perspective, by a Christian, and compared to atheism - of course it is going to look more reasonable.

But, what about we compare a YEC or YLC faith with Theistic evolution? Which faith then looks more reasonable?

ahh...that takes us straight back where we have been bouncing for a while:) I like your use of the word "reasonable". It suggests a faith that reasons through and has basis for its belief. This is slightly tongue in cheek, but do you see my point? Despite all that has been said on various threads, I still don't think YEC and YLC are reasonable faiths because they cannot do justice to a
reasonable examination of the data available about our world. (yes David, yourself, Horace, and Trevor to mention a few will disagree:)

Of course, I won't ask you to explain where your thinking Creator came from to create the thinking, (lesser) beings. In reality, there is less faith needed to believe a thinking human could arise from chance than that an Omnipotent God could do so. (saying he has always been is equally a statement of faith)

Cheers

---

**cb25** 7 hours ago

Just something to think about following on in part from my last comment. Read it carefully.

If we state that beauty, design and thinking beings (us) cannot become what we are through evolutionary processes, we have no justification, beyond or apart from a statement of faith, to claim God just is, or that he has always been because we make a statement of equal force about the impossibility of God coming to be.

If we state that beauty, design and thinking beings (us) can become what we are through an evolutionary process, we make a statement of equal force that God also could have come to be.

In other words:

Evolution opens the door to the possibility of the coming to be of God, denial of evolution leaves one claiming for God what is denied for ourselves.

Note. I have not made any comment about the origin of life or the source of all matter. That is the next step back, but similar arguments would carry.

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**J. David Newman** 3 hours ago

David

You are quite right with your examples. However that is not what I was talking about. Is there a God or is there not.? That is not abstract reality. Either position takes faith. One prominent atheist, Anthony Flew, after writing books arguing against there was a God finally changed his mind and came to believe in a God. Now he made clear that this was not the Christian God but he was willing to change his mind because he came to realise that it did not make sense that nothing could produce something. That something had to produce something and he was convinced by the more recent argument from design that there had to be something there and he agreed that it was an intelligent being.

cb25

You don't believe YEC has any validity. Let me stay for the moment on the faith statements that evolutionists have to make which I stated on another blog.

1. When it comes to dating methods it is a faith statement that says that the original material was pure without contamination.
2. It is a faith statement that the rate of decay has never changed.
3. It is a faith statement that the Big Bang could occur
4. It is a faith statement that the chaos from the big bang could produce order
5. It is a faith statement that non life can produce life.

I could go on but these five make my point. That is part of the reason I believe that it takes more faith to believe in the five examples than to believe God created the universe and the earth.

David Langworthy

J. David,
Have a nice day. dl
The Blending of American Roman Catholicism and Protestantism

Submitted Oct 26, 2011
By Herb Douglass

While working on another writing assignment, I found several articles that suddenly gave me some focus for this blog. They related to certain paragraphs written years ago that I and others had a difficult time figuring out how they could ever become reality, especially in the United States.

Such paragraphs as: “The wide diversity of belief in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. But there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed — however important they might be from a Bible standpoint — must necessarily be waived.

“When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result.” The Great Controversy, p 444-445.

Summary:

1. Centuries of history have proved that unity on doctrine is most improbable.
2. In recent years a dramatic change is occurring in that Protestant churches can at least agree on “common point of doctrine.”
3. To achieve this unity, subjects on which they do not agree will be waived.
4. This new vision is shared by both Protestants and Catholics.
5. The time will come when Protestants and Catholics, now unified on ‘common points of doctrine,’ will seek governmental support of their wishes, leading to ‘civil penalties’ upon dissenters.

I had recently pulled an article by Greg Hamilton that he wrote in the Pacific Union Gleaner, March 2006. In this article, among other observations, he raised some important questions:

Adventists support the United States Constitution which provides safeguards protecting freedom of religion regardless of majority consensus or sentiment. These safeguards are in danger of being removed 'by Catholic and evangelical zealots' (who are roughly 60 percent of U.S.A. voters) who seek government action in the interest of promoting the commonly shared beliefs in abortion, traditional family and Sunday sacredness, etc.

- Adventists believe that while Christians should be at the forefront in promoting Bible-based moral values, they should speak out against judicial or legislative efforts to mandate or define the human relationship to God and worship as contained in the first four commandments.
- Pope Benedict XVI has publicly stated that Christians in America, and most specifically Catholics, are now in a position to dramatically influence U.S. domestic and foreign policy to reflect the divine commands of God. For the first time, Catholic Supreme Court justices are in the majority.

Bible prophecies have been given to us so we will not be deceived by otherwise sincere men and
women who seek through traditional moral, social and political methods to save mankind by establishing what they believe to be Christ’s millennial kingdom on earth. (We call that “dominionism.”) Pretty good for starters, but Scriptures tell us that His followers will spend the Millennium in heaven!

Then I put alongside that article another on the same subject from the Roman Catholic viewpoint of how Roman Catholics and Protestants are now enjoying a new platform of common cause: The End of American Catholicism? by Pierre Hegy in America, May 1, 1993.

The author compared an earlier article also titled, The End of American Catholicism? written in 1972 by William C. McCready and Andrew M. Greeley who had raised the question of the future of American Catholicism by comparing Catholic church attendance and beliefs in 1963 and 1972.

Then, for the period 1972-1990, Hegy made the same survey, with the same order as the 1963 survey. In summary, verifying their numbers, but with much greater spreads: the drop in church attendance but more ominously, the slippage in the young dropping much faster, having levels that are similar to Protestants.

In morality areas, Catholics who condemned premarital sex dropped from 38 percent in 1972 to 18 percent in 1988-90, while approval went from 21 percent to 44 percent — nearly double. (Protestants in 1971, largely condemned premarital sex as always wrong, but this decreased to 34 percent in 1988-90. Abortion produced similar numbers.) All of which reminded the researchers to note the social structure that prevailed for many years, the hierarchical model and the theology of the Council of Trent, are being increasingly rejected by the majority of Catholics.

This led Hegy to ask, “Who is the church?” Then he answered, “In simple terms, it is not primarily the ‘teaching church,’ nor the ‘thinking church,’ nor the ‘evangelical church’ but a mix of all three.

Then he hooked up with Cassius Yuhaus in The Catholic and American Culture, (1990) where two cultural models in USA Catholicism were distinguished:

- The teaching, immigrant model (traditional)
- The evangelical model — the most dynamic and influential...[being] centered on the Scripture and the person of Jesus. According to Yuhaus, as well as survey data, doctrinal formulas and church documents are seen as less significant than Scripture and personal piety. The question is not so much, ‘what does the church teach?’ as ‘what would Jesus do?’

The ‘evangelical model’ offers an alternative to the conservative-liberal dichotomy, to the extent that it emphasizes the empowerment of all through Scripture. In this perspective, church attendance and personal beliefs can only be a matter of choice and maturity, for Catholics as well as for Protestants. Presto! The Protestant-Catholic differential will likely disappear!

Of course, it all depends on what kind of ‘empowerment’ we are talking about. How exactly are the Scriptures being used? In both Protestant and Catholic circles we have seen the rise of what has been called the ‘social gospel,’like feminism, liberation theology, and the fight for ‘social justice,’ all in the interest of working on ‘common points of agreement.’

I have seen it happening before my eyes in the last 50 years! Who would have thought it? Both Protestants and Catholics are using the Scriptures selectively to bless their ‘common points of agreement.’ No wonder we see the picture of a world at last finding its mission of setting up the kingdom of God on earth. It seems so logical and doable.
No more Protestant-Catholic tension! All that is for the trash bin!

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<tr>
<th>Ron Corson</th>
<th>1 week ago</th>
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<td>It is way more then that Herb, We have Islamists preaching social Justice, such as the Imam offering Friday Prayers for occupy Wall Street last week. And the communists declare their allegiance to social justice as well. Why I even found social justice praised by the modern Nazi party, So what do all these revolutionaries, anarchists, communists, progressives and socialists have in common? They want a new economic order, &quot;death to capitalism death to America&quot;, ( that last actually a quote from a recent rally in Iran supporting the occupy wall street movement). So yes you are on to something Herb. But much broader and more dangerous then the 19th century expectations of Ellen White. We do ourselves no favors by clinging to her through the glass darkly view.</td>
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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
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<td>What to EGW seemed certain and imminent when written, do not necessarily apply 100 years later. There are rapid changes as Ron mentions above: The anti-catholic sentiment that was very prevalent in the early 19th century has changed to fear of the &quot;Muslim hordes&quot; that soon will enact Sharia law. Times and institutions change and failure to recognize those may lead one to adopting old ideas and beliefs that have been preempted by newer problems, completely unimagined when those warnings were written.</td>
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<th>laffal</th>
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<td>I know Herb does not use this blog to promote his books, but if you were to get a copy of the recently published Red Alert:... Interpreting Today's Headlines in the Light of Prophecy... read chapter 1. There is some very compelling facts to take into consideration as to how this world could easily, and for the most part is on its way to such a place as described in the GC. And the rest of the book just enlarges the fact finding basis for what he's proposed here. We may not necessarily agree with the premise of what is said... but scoffing has never led to a peaceful / happy conclusion... Watch and pray.</td>
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<th>cb25</th>
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<td>Herb,</td>
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<td>If you want to get into prophecy do some quick calculations on how many years it was between the rise of Islam (Mohammed) and its near demise around 1798! Of course one could equally postulate that such a wounding has or is being healed, and much of the world is wondering after it!</td>
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<td>Cheers</td>
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Michael Reeves
1 week ago

I am hearing from the above statements that the Papal leadership is being extended to the Muslims. I can attest that this is present in Judaism as well. I entered a Jewish worship center a few years ago and found a picture of the nation of Israel breaking off and making its way to Heaven. All the while being led by the Pope. Just think of other ramifications. Interesting how Jesus used helps to the salvation of others and how social justice is being perverted to push World agenda.

Bill Cork
1 week ago

And yet the reality is Catholics are suffering in the US today at the hands of state actions depriving them of religious liberty. State mandates on abortion, birth control, insurance coverage, gay adoption, gay marriage, are forcing the closure of Catholic hospitals and adoption agencies, and forcing individual Catholics to choose between their job and their faith. The US bishops are so concerned they've established a new committee on religious liberty; the chairman, Bishop William Lori of Bridgeport, CT, testified to a House subcommittee yesterday. You may read his testimony here: http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/upload/lori-testimony-on-religious-freedom-2011-10-26.pdf

Worth reading.

Bill Cork
1 week ago

Also this by an old acquaintance of mine, Jose Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles: http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2011/10/defending-our-first-freedom

Herbert Douglass
1 week ago

Those noting the somewhat quiet overtures by Catholic leaders with Muslim leaders are on track. I noted that too in the book that Laffal mentioned. Remember, the more Roman Catholicism changes, the more it remains the same. IMO, we must keep our eyes on the Big Picture rather than the ebb and flow of the nightly news. Sometimes, it helps to live a few decades before the lights come on and see that those prescient pages in The Great Controversy have not missed yet--and increasingly more relevant.

Stephen Foster
1 week ago

OK, Herb, identifies two trends here: the one whereby the “constitutional safeguards protecting freedom of religion regardless of majority consensus or sentiment…[are] in danger of being removed by…[voters] who seek government action in the interest of promoting the commonly shared beliefs [about] abortion, traditional family and Sunday sacredness, etc.,” and the other wherein within “both Protestant and Catholic circles we have seen the rise of…[movements] ‘like feminism, liberation theology, and the fight for ‘social justice,’ all in the interest of ‘common points of agreement.’”

In either trend we can discern the inevitable fulfillment of bible prophecy; with one trend possibly
enveloping the other, in realignment. However the GC narrative clearly delineates which trend will be in ascendancy or in a dominant posture in the United States.

The question is whether the GC narrative and exegesis is inspired. I say “yes.”

Elaine said, What EGW said was certain and imminent when written, do not necessarily apply 100 years later...Times and institutions change and failure to recognize those may lead one to adopting old ideas and beliefs that have been preempted by newer problems, completely unimagined when those warnings were written.” My sentiments exactly. If Satan is going to deceive if possible the very elect, then why would he follow a script so defined in GC? My guess is he will use something and from a direction that the SDA event watchers are least expecting.

The article describing the protestant side mentions increased efforts to bring government action to the Abortion and Sexual morality issues. The second article, giving the catholic side, mentions a steady decrease of catholics who disapprove of Abortion and Sexual morality rules. What am I missing here? The two groups appear to be moving in opposing directions in these questions, and that indicates movement towards an union how?

The RC members are moving in a different direction to their church, as are the members of Protestant churches. The RC church still agrees 100% with conservative Protestant churches on these issues. That has not stopped the percentage of those opposing abortion, homosexuality, sex before marriage, etc declining in both groups. It is possible that both RC and Protestant church leaders could see using secular power as a way not only of imposing 'Christian' morality on unbelievers, but also on believers who have 'wandered' from the churches' position.

But presumably they would need the full support of their members to make it happen (democracy being power through the majority), thus reducing the chances it will take place with every passing year.

I think sometimes we look through a glass darkly or a telescope backwards. I do not want to discount EGW prophecies entirely. But I believe there is altogether too much crowing about some present world events by many SDA's, who read some broad statement of hers written over 100 years ago and insist she predicted it. Shooting a hole in the side of a barn and then drawing a target around it afterwards, does not make one a crack shot.
Thomas has zeroed in on the problem with Herb's analysis. Herb draws from different belief systems and trends that push and pull in different directions to reach a conclusion that they are all moving in one direction.

The Vatican, liberal protestants, and secularists prefer collectivism. They are united around the theme of one world government to enforce an equitable distribution of resources and protect the environment, and eliminate war, famine, etc. Evangelical protestants, on the other hand, unite around the theme of returning political power to individuals and their local political bodies so that they will be free to promote fundamental moral values of private property rights, personal freedom, and individual responsibility. They are deeply distrustful of concentrating political power in an all-powerful federal government - much more so a world government.

As these opposing philosophies struggle for power and dominance, my crystal ball has a hard time seeing evangelical protestants and American conservative Catholics, who are committed to founding principles, joining hands with the liberal forces that are agitating for a regulatory world body governed by the rule of "wise men" rather than the rule of law.

I certainly agree with Herb that we are in an end time, and that we seem to be on the brink of a Biblical apocalypse. I just don't think he's put the dots together that demonstrate how evangelical protestantism and Catholicism are working in unity to vindicate the SDA apocalyptic narrative. The powerful forces of secularism and Islam are absent from the SDA narrative, unless of course one wants to categorize secularism as "spiritualism" - not an unreasonable inference.

Most of the dots are before our eyes. But I believe it is delusional for us to think we can connect all those dots in the right order, just as it was delusional for Jews, when Christ first appeared, to think that they could connect all the dots in the right order. If we don't keep ourselves open to letting God, instead of our cherished, self-promoting narratives connect the dots, we are liable to find ourselves, as did the First Century Jewish leaders, on the wrong side.

Well said. The voice of reason speaks amidst the reductionist arguments. Please keep showing us the other side of the coin. It may not be as exciting but it helps us keep our feet on the ground.

Nathan, here's a interesting post; in that I am in complete agreement with the concluding sentence — while disagreeing with most, though not all, of that which preceded it. How is that possible?

I agree (perhaps?) with (you and) Herb that we are in the end time (as possibly opposed to your "an end time"), and that we are (as opposed to your "seem to be…") on the brink of the Biblical apocalypse.
We are also in agreement that “most of the dots are before our eyes.” Where we part, of course, is that it appears clear that much of the post was comprised of commentary related to a private “cherished…narrative;” as opposed to *tracing the lines already provided by the previously connected prophesied dots of “the SDA narrative.”*

Tim Manning 6 days ago

Consistently the SDA denomination has stood in unity with American Zionists, socialists, communists and American atheists on the nature of the relationship of Christianity and American governance, a position oppose by many of its pastors. It is way past time for a bed-check.

At the same time the SDA General Conference has urged its members to support anti-smoking laws on a national level, and supported "civil rights" rather than "human rights" during the 1960's-70's along with apostate American Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism. The SDA church remains "statist" in its views of governmental forms and maintains the socialists views of modernity forgetting that God is the giver of all human "rights", not the state. The Adventist position on the relationship of "church and state" is shallow and lacks continuity and reason.

Horace Butler 6 days ago

Never mind what the church has done in the past; in what way is the SDA Church's current position on the separation of church and state "shallow and lacks continuity and reason?" You want more blending of church and state? Hostility toward the church on the part of the state?

Stephen Foster 6 days ago

In this context, I would like to take a crack at answering Tom’s question “If Satan is going to deceive if possible the very elect, then why would he follow a script so defined in GC?…” and addressing his supposition that “he will use something and from a direction that the SDA event watchers are least expecting.”

First off, the operative phrase is “if [it were] possible” which means, or strongly implies, that it is (or will) **not** be possible to deceive the very elect. This of course is itself a prophecy, the purpose of which—as are all prophecies (and prophets)—is to let God’s people “in” on *precisely* what will happen; so that they will not in any way be deceived. Amos 3:7, Revelation 22:6

The way it is possible to be deceived anyway, even while Satan is following the script verbatim, is to ignore—and/or reject—the prophetic utterances, and **choose** to look elsewhere; perhaps for reasons of political or economic convenience, or for whatever reason.

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago

Why would satan choose to operate the way he has been expected to? If an invader meets all our expectations, we would be ready for him, wouldn't we?

Just as Jesus said he would come "as a thief in the night." Our expectations should not focus on either satan or Jesus' exact plans. We do not know either, but apparently love to speculate.
Elaine,

Have you thought that he just might not be able to help himself.

Elaine Nelson
6 days ago

Who just "might not be able to help himself" Satan or God?

laffal
6 days ago

Elaine,

Satan!

This was clearly demonstrated when he became so infuriated that he insighted the Jews to crucify Christ, and in so doing he essentially destroyed himself. Why would he do something like that? Sin!!! Romans 7:14-23 tell us that because of sin, even when we want to do the right thing we don't, and when we don't want to do the wrong thing we do. Why? Sin!!!

The GC theme as described as scripted will only prove out this point at the end of the day. As I have been saying... all we can do is wait and see...

Stephen Foster
6 days ago

Neither God nor the devil can “help” themselves, Elaine. Each is who each is, for better or worse.

God, who is love, cannot do otherwise. (My father preached a sermon along those lines years ago.) God cannot lie; while Satan invented lying.

God is all powerful and all knowing. Satan cannot turn God into a liar, nor can he outsmart or outmaneuver Him. And, because the truth is not in Satan, he literally cannot help but lie.

Laffal’s point is well taken and demonstrates the point perfectly. The "script" of Christ’s incarnation and death was followed without an iota of variance. This pattern, or syndrome, is repeating itself with impeccable Divine precision. What is prophesied will come to pass, no matter how familiar Satan is with "the script." This is the result of criminal insanity; otherwise referred to as iniquity.
Nathan Schilt
6 days ago

The script is seen perfectly in hindsight, Stephen. But there is much in the O.T. that supported the script that the Jewish leaders had written. You have to unpack a lot of vague symbolism to think Christ's first advent should have been clear to the Jewish leaders. Their problem was that they had put God in their prophetic box, just as Adventists have put God in a prophetic box. The one thing that is constant and predictable about the divine intersection with human experience is that God always surprises. Beware of those who claim to have a script!

Stephen Foster
6 days ago

Nathan,

What threw the Jewish leaders “off” concerning the prophecies of Messiah was, in large measure, due to their desire for temporal, cultural, and political power; even hegemony.

Clearly, the prophecies concerning Messiah were not lost on those magi from the East, upon whom the spirit of prophecy descended.

The facts are that history is repeating; and that cultural pride can obfuscate prophecy. Any “prophetic box” is for our benefit. It is the reason why “we” exist. We have not put God in any box. He provided the prophetic framework Himself.

Had the Jewish leaders no temporal, cultural, or political ambition or designs, the "prophetic box” could have served them quite well. The same might be said of “us.”

Horace Butler
6 days ago

It is becoming clearer how Satan will deceive as many as possible. He uses a different method for the world than he does for the church. There is sometimes a lot of emphasis in the SDA Church on Sunday laws. But SDA’s won’t be deceived by Sunday laws. If the deceptions are so strong that they would, if possible, deceive the elect, they would have to be subtle, and not so easily detected. This is happening before our very eyes and is not recognized by many in the church. The inroads of eastern mysticism, under the guise of "spiritual formation," "contemplative prayer," "centering prayer," and so on, are well documented. Many people embrace them without a second thought. Those who object are perceived to be against prayer, or are labeled as divisive. That's only one area where subtle deception is affecting many. Ellen White spoke of the "alpha and omega" of apostasy. The alpha was pantheism, and it deceived many. The omega could be of a similar nature.

As for Catholics suffering in the US; I find that notion almost comical. A majority of the Supreme Court justices are Catholic. In fact, there are currently no Protestant Supreme Court justices. 50 years ago that could have never happened. Now, few eyebrows are raised. Those who deny that Ellen White was the Lord's messenger may be puzzled to know how she accurately predicted, more
than a century ago, that Roman Catholicism would regain its popularity to such a great extent. And she wrote during a time when anti-Catholic bigotry was alive and well.

Ella M.  6 days ago

HB: Deceiving the elect could mean anything including political leanings that are stronger than our faith. When you are so sure about spiritual disciplines being "of Satan" I need to ask how it is that those practicing said disciplines are more Christlike, caring, and loving than most of us. Can a house be divided against itself?

God is the Alpha and Omega. (I don't understand this other definition) I find the terminology as something a few people jumped on as a kind of conspirational theory. I think it is another of those "bearing false witness" testimonies. One could also say that Satan is attacking these practices because he doesn't want us closer to Jesus through prayer and meditation.

Pantheism is belief that we are gods and God is in everything rather than a separate Creator being. I don't find Pantheism in the Christian practice of the disciplines.

John Mark  6 days ago

I have a few contentions with this post. You first suggest that Catholics and Protestants are uniting under the banner of conservative activism and then suggest they are uniting under the banner of liberal activism. Of course both of these are likely true, but that undermines the evidence that everybody is unifying for a one world order.

I'm also not sure what you're getting at concerning our Catholic Supreme Court justices. If you're suggesting that it means anti-Catholic bigotry has greatly subsided meaning that a future alliance is now more feasible then you have a point. However, if you're suggesting that we are already in trouble because there are Catholics in high places then you're just being intellectually lazy. There is no evidence that our Catholic Justices are plotting to undermine the Constitution or establish Catholic law. Roberts and Alito, I think, are both minimalists with a high regard for Staire Decisis and a desire to see the Court's role limited. Thomas and Scalia are both originalists deeply committed to upholding the constitution's original meaning (I think it would be possible to do this with a more liberal orientation as the law professor Akhil Amer suggests, but I digress...). I don't know what Kennedy's philosophy is, but I know of no evidence that he is plotting the rise of Catholic power. Of course, anything's possible, but that doesn't make it true. Suggesting conspiratorial plots without evidence runs a little too close "bearing false witness" for my comfort.

All of this underlines what I think has been a problem in Adventist eschatological thinking. It's not the prophecies I have a problem with, but the way in which they are defended. If we truly believe that the Bible prophesies Catholicism as the beast, then that should be enough. We should be comfortable with elements of current events that don't quite add up and rest in the fact that God sees behind the curtain. Instead we often make fools out of ourselves twisting and cherry-picking the news to make it support our view. Instead of trusting that an Omniscient God can see behind the curtain, we claim to see behind it ourselves. At its' best this action is divisive and makes appear a bit crazy, at its worst we "bear false witness."

Stephen Foster  6 days ago
John Mark,

Being considered a minimalist or having a high regard for precedence are obviously a couple of those “in the eye of the beholder” things. Minimalism is relative to what it is that is being considered, as is the regard for court precedence.

If it is something that so-called minimalists desire to see overturned, they will become activists. If precedent is not to their liking, they will ignore it.

John Mark
5 days ago

This is no doubt true, but unless you're God, you have to go by what someone says to determine their motives. We can't peer into their hearts. Is there anything in the actions of Roberts, Alito, Thomas, Scalia, or Kennedy that point to a desire to establish Papal rule? I have been a bit of a Constitutional law junky and I know of no such evidence.

Stephen Foster
4 days ago

There are, as you know, a few Supreme Court justices—of whom Scalia and Thomas are certainly numbered—who have a view of the Establishment Clause which has been categorized or classified as accommodationist; as opposed to that of a separationist view.

The accommodationist view generally supports accommodations for official collaborative/cooperative religion and government (i.e. church and state), functions, activities, funding, and ceremonies; whereas the separationist view holds, like Jefferson, that the Establishment Clause erects “a wall of separation of between Church and State.”

As you may know (speaking of precedent), as a result of the 1971 Lemon v. Kurtzman decision, the Court has applied this three-step “Lemon Test” to challenged legislation and activity: 1) does it have a legitimate secular legislative purpose?, 2) does its primary effect either advance or inhibit religion, and 3) does it excessively entangle the government with religion (or presumably vice versa). The second of this three-pronged approach is especially important to those of us who happen to subscribe to the historical prophetic SDA take on eventual eschatological Constitutional contradictions.

Justice Scalia is, of course, on record as having compared the Lemon Test to a “ghoul in a late-night horror movie” that “stalks” American Establishment Clause jurisprudence; stating that it is a “strange notion” that the same Constitution which through its Free Exercise Clause “gives religion in general preferential treatment forbids endorsement of religion in general.”

As you are aware, there have been a number of cases (e.g., Board of Education v. Grumet, Zobrest v. Catalina Foothill Schools District, Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union, Lee v. Weisman, and Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe) in the past two decades in which the court has had opportunity to apply the Lemon Test to the Establishment Clause; with Scalia and Thomas having both largely voted predictably.

Actions indeed are more meaningful than words.

The blatant establishing of an official “papal rule” is a distractive canard; a red herring, for
which there is no prophetic SDA doctrinal predicate with regard to eschatology.

Ella M.  
6 days ago

I like your point about "bearing false witness" and this happens everytime we attack some other group and stereotype their people. If these things are to happen on schedule, then so be it. On the other hand the "beast" power or spirit can be manifest in any of us including our own church. It happens when one worships a church instead of God and makes it the ultimate purveyor of truth. We may even be guilty of worshiping the Sabbath and making it an end in itself when it is a symbol of Jesus who is our true rest from works.

But as someone else has said, when Christ came, He surprised the majority of Jews because they worshiped their religion and expected a Zionist warrior/leader to save their group rather than a spiritual leader and Savior of the whole world. I tend to think our eschatology is too narrow.

Maybe God wants this church to broaden its thinking to be more inclusive before He comes. EGW did not see the rise of Islam; and part of the GC prophecy could be conditional on our obedience to love others in belief and actions.

Stephen Foster  
6 days ago

Ella,

That God wants us “to be more inclusive before He comes” doesn’t necessarily mean that our eschatology is too narrow.

I understand by “inclusive” you actually meant to be more willing to include others as possible players, with other possible end-time scenarios, in our eschatological outlook; but why?

Surely there were those in the preceding generation or two (or three) of Adventists who contemporaneously believed that Hitler’s Third Reich should have been “included” in eschatological terms. I may have mentioned this previously, but the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation upon which the GC narrative is based, are not conditional; at least according to Revelation 1:1 and Revelation 22:6.

Why do we sometimes feel a need—or a desire—to privatize or contemporize “our” eschatological understanding? We have been “gifted.” Why second-guess it?

I have my theories. How about you?

Herbert Douglass  
6 days ago

I am more than pleased with the way this thread is going--just as I had hoped. Yes, I have learned that I can trust the Big Picture as outlined in Scripture and, in particular, the book THE GREAT CONTROVERSY. The longer I live, the clearer both become. Of course, both streams have been misunderstood over the years, just as they were in Christ's day. But the closer one keeps to the Big Picture (The Great Controversy Theme), the clearer and safer one's understanding becomes. I too have lived through the several misapplications such as Hitler, or Communism, etc., being the fullfillers of certain prophecies, even in our own periodicals.
We must recognize that the "signs" include far more than "rumors of war," earthquakes, etc. The real issues are always working their ways through the contours of history, often just below the surface. Those who are keeping their eyes on the rapid increase of interest, even in our own circles, in a multitude of "self-help," experienced-centered, religious praxis, are understanding more clearly the emphasis on "false revivals" so clearly emphasized in GC.

When she uses the phrases "alpha" and "omega," White is comparing the immensely powerful and almost overwhelming appeal of spiritualistic thinking that split, almost 50-50, the General Conference delegates (1903). She compared these pleasing concepts to a train that would pick up steam and baggage and become the Omega of the last days, especially in the Adventist Church. In a nutshell, many will be drawn to the excitement of novelty and "freshness" of religious practices that promise a new way to find inner peace and "satisfaction" in new spiritual disciplines, such as contemplative prayer, yoga, "the silence," or, for those so inclined, certain kinds of song-fests, etc.

Any kind of spiritual experience will do if it centers on "experience" that focuses on anything but a direct connection with our Lord through Bible study and prayer. Mantras are not meant to be a direct listening to a personal God--it goes in the opposite direction. One does not hear the clear message of condemnation for sin, for example. Or hear the calming whisper of a comforting Lord in tough times.

Many religious/spiritual forces will combine in the last days that will succeed in tempting and in "converting" even many Saturday-keepers--the pressure of standing amidst misunderstanding will not be worth it. Religious experience will triumph over calm spiritual reasoning resting on Scripture. The issues in the last of the last days will pivot on "whom" we actually worship. And the test of "experience" will be that pivot.

Ella M. 5 days ago

I don't think it is that simple and I have lots of questions concerning what you have said. I would be willing to present them to you without going through here. I am not sure what you consider "spiritualism" and what "split" the General Conference delegates in 1903. I understand spiritualism as one of those things one can't always explain, but you know it when you see it. The things you are calling spiritualism do not all fit the picture except in the minds of the practitioners. Going that route we would need to give up being vegetarian, vegan and a lot of good healthy exercises. We would have to say that only western medicine was right (even though it's often secular and even agnostic). The lines can't be drawn that sharply and they cut off most of the population we try to reach.

Elaine Nelson 5 days ago

Why is not simple Bible study alone not preferred? Millions have devoted much time to studying the Bible without EGW's extra-biblical messages, which have often distorted, in some minds, the Bible as it is. The devotion to any particular Bible expositor, live or dead, can be a stumbling block or an asset. Theology is simply a branch of philosophy in studying the ethical patterns for living and why humans construct those models. There can never be absolute certainty on both of these disciplines, only becoming knowledgeable on all the various theories over the years, refining them, embracing them, only later to discard them for some newer theory.
There is no one who has more knowledge of God than anyone else. All that we know of God is what other humans have thought or written, and age and time cannot make any more valuable than another. The Bible writers had a particular view of God consistent with their contemporaries who perceived their gods; Christianity developed its ideas, leaving much of Judaism behind. The other monotheistic religion initiated by Mohamed also has a picture of God. All these three great religions have different ideas of God and for any to say only their is the true one is merely "my God is better than your God" boast. God is not bound by man's desire to "own" him for themselves: He is the God of all and anyone's opinion, whether written 4,000 years ago or yesterday or all of equal worth.

Horace Butler 5 days ago

Are you suggesting that all of our knowledge of God is human generated? That the Biblical writers "created" a god in harmony with the prevailing theories of deity? If that is the case then the Bible is no better than any other religious literature, and churches have no basis for their existence, other than to function as social clubs, which people use as escape mechanisms to keep them from thinking about their final destiny: compost.

The veracity of the Bible is too obvious for me to buy into that nonsense.

Ella M. 5 days ago

Stephen,

Yes, I can see your point about making our eschatology too contemporary to what is happening at the time. I take that seriously and will keep it in mind. A man by the name of Dave Wilkerson also had some visions of the end-times in the early 1970s. He was the evangelical who helped the urban gang members in NYC and had a number of miracles happen. His visions seem to ring true when it comes to the financial crises and environmental issues. However, he also missed the Islam threat/issue.

I think the whole Christian church should be included. All the seven churches were Christian and it is only when we come to the Laodicean that we try to make it our church only. I also believe the Holy Spirit works among the nonbelievers and other religions to those who will listen.

David Read 5 days ago

One interesting development that I believe has eschatological significance is the convergence of Catholic and Protestant on the question of the authority of Scripture.

It once was the case that Protestants held Scripture as their supreme authority, whereas Catholics viewed church tradition as paramount. Catholics viewed the Church itself as above Scripture (because the Catholic Church had established the canon) and taught that Scripture has authority only as mediated through and interpreted by the Church's teaching authority or magisterium.

Today, many Protestant theologians will come right out and deprecate the authority of Scripture, arguing that many passages are simply culturally conditioned and have no application today. In doing this, they effectively put themselves above Scripture. They will also sometimes come right
out and say that the laity must accept the interpretations of trained theologians who have studied the original languages, etc. This attitude is well established in many of the liberal Protestant denominations, and is creeping slowly into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This new attitude on the part of Protestants toward Scripture is effectively moving Protestantism closer to Catholicism, which has always maintained that Scripture must be interpreted under the guidance of the Church's learned doctors.

Herbert Douglass 5 days ago

David said it right. He could also have included the recent collaborations and joint conclusions that Evangelicals and Roman Catholics have made regarding the rehabbing of Martin Luther--but on their common terms. And the very soon reuniting of the Church of England with the Papacy. Examine the forthright statements from Protestants and Roman Catholics on theistic evolution. I could go on. This is all simply amazing and all within the last 40 years!

Turned off by conventional churches that have lost their spiritual pulse, these seekers also have turned off the Bible as a source of divine revelations. But these "turned off" ones are not leaving the circle of Christianity in order to follow the occult world--they are helping the occult world remodel the Christian Church, without realizing it. When clear Bible texts are made to say that "God is in everything and everything is in God," we should recognize the subtle deception that is flooding even Christian bookstores. What a difference between, say 1990 and 2011! Cheers, Herb

Kevin Riley 4 days ago

Perhaps you have missed the development that a growing majority of Anglicans are evangelical with no intention of uniting with Rome? When you exclude the evangelicals and liberals who Rome does not want, how much of the Anglican church is left to unite with Rome?

JaNe 5 days ago

Watching the religious cable channels it seems that Christianity is becoming more and more similar. For instance they seem to be glued together by the Prosperity Gospel and dispensational pre-millennial (secret rapture crowd) support for Israel. Also spiritualism is creeping in. BTW I too support Israel's right to exist, not for doctrinal reasons, but for simple common decency.

Herbert Douglass 4 days ago

JaNe has his/her bright lights on! And we all can, I hope, agree with his/her comments about Israel. Regarding the tsunami of modern spiritualism (not the seance type): Never has a generation of young and old, or rich and poor, thrown itself with such abandon into the winds of subjectivism, hoping to satisfy its desires for spiritual warmth without self-denial. The world on all continents is being led to conform to a universal spirituality that proclaims the oneness of all--a brotherhood of "believers" who live in tolerance toward one another's religious beliefs because the Reality they worship is deeper than divisive doctrine. Or so they think! This global, unifying spirituality positions the world to welcome, perhaps the Mother Mary, the Great Peacemaker. Or the great Impersonator himself--Satan himself, when he imitates the return of Jesus. Just letting the flow
Haven't Protestants and Catholics always had a lot of things in common? Shared beliefs and values do not necessarily indicate a conspiracy. Liberal Protestantism and Catholicism do in many ways share a common world view, as do conservative Protestants and conservative Catholics. The former discount the authority of scripture and seek a kingdom of Heaven on earth through world government controlling economies, environmental impacts and redistribution of income. The latter take scripture much more seriously, believe in traditional values, and are alarmed at concentrated power without the checks and balances contained in constitutional, limited, representative government.

So where does that lead you Herb? Yes, there are movements afoot, and they presage the eschaton. But who will end up on which side is anything but clear, and the notion that the battle lines will be drawn along denominational fault lines within Christianity requires, I believe, a highly selective retrieval of available data from current events.

Surely, it is a pleasure reading Nathan's contributions from time to time. As we all know, it isn't easy predicting the future; in fact, it is hazardous, often foolish. All we can do is to keep our eyes on the Big Picture. How all the details keep reforming like a kaleidoscope is always fascinating, but not too disturbing, as long as we stay close to the prophetic contours. Personally, I keep my eye on the growing rapprochment between Catholics and Protestants (and eventually Muslims) as they collectively respond to the Perfect Storm (economic, social, natural, etc). In the end, it surely will be a union of erstwhile antagonists (no matter what level) in voting for world peace and global cooperation. All the while, those who value allegiance to what they understand are God's parameters, so contrary to the world in general, will come to the moment of Great Decision. How all the pieces in this Grand Experiment in running this world will develop will be most interesting to see! IMO.

Herb,

I'd like to pick up on a couple of your points and a question.

Spiritualism, as you see it. What do you make of the 1907 Kellogg/Amadon interview?

The Alpha and Omega has just as much chance of being the "storm of conservative destruction" that is threatening our church today, as it has of being spiritualism.

If you are waiting for Muslims to work with Catholics and Protestants in any significant way...I suggest you don't hold your breath.

What about my point earlier about how Mohammed and Islam actually fit the 1260 year prophecy...
too? What do you do with that?

I would suggest that if there is anything in prophecy, the day could come when you are manning a paddle in a lifeboat alongside a catholic. If fundamentalist Islam had its way you would find that we Christians of all persuasions are in the same boat!

If I can say this respectfully (probably not), you spin good responses and a good yarn here when things go as you want. What about all the questions I and some others have addressed to you, and even David N for that matter. And you say nothing. It does puzzle me.

Cheers

Nathan Schilt
3 days ago

I agree with much of your skepticism Chris. But I definitely see liberal Protestantism and liberal Catholicism as distressingly tolerant - even envious - of radical Islam and totalitarian regimes throughout the world, as long as they do not receive support from the U.S. I think on the political stage liberal Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims are in many ways working together very closely. Look at how "well" they work together in Europe and in the U.N. The Vatican has been speaking out rather forcefully regarding the need for centralized world authority over the economies of the world.

The forces that believe in righteousness through command and control political systems (liberal/apostate Protestants, authoritarian Catholics, and Muslims) seem to be increasingly cozy with political powers and political religions that are able to successfully sublimate individuality to the "greater good" through political means. I do not know how it will all play out. But I don't see how one can look at the current scene and not feel, in light of Bible prophecy, that we are at an historical end time, whether or not you see Sunday laws in your crystal ball.

Stephen Foster
3 days ago

There you go again Nathan. You must certainly know that your "crystal ball" is one in which you “see” nearly any entities that are ideologically or geopolitically at odds with you as included in your cast of eschatological players; yet exclude your ideological and/or geopolitical allies as possible/probable players.

You do this, I submit, because you reject your church’s teaching on both the beginning and the end of the age.

If, on the other hand, you were willing to accept your church’s teaching on “alpha” and “omega,” that is the Genesis narrative and the GC take on Daniel and Revelation particularly, you wouldn’t need a personal “crystal ball;” and would include your political allies as possible—even probable—players.

This hearkens back to an earlier exchange on this strand regarding how the Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus’ birth misinterpreted prophecy because of their geopolitical preoccupation.
I exclude nothing and no one as possible players, Stephen. Perhaps I am wrong in my interpretation of how religious interests seem to be aligning themselves with geopolitical powers and asserting their religious views as moral and political imperatives. But it would be nice if you would address that issue instead of personally attacking me because you think my eschatological views are the product of political ideology. I don't reject the Church's teaching. I simply think one large element of the narrative (denominational battles over Sunday laws) has little purchase in present day reality. And if our prophetic narrative does not speak to the reality that people perceive and inhabit, it is likely to primarily attract truthers and birthers.

Nothing in the Adventist or Biblical metanarrative, as constructed or applied, has historically indicted a particular political party or movement. But Adventists have, to say the least, been quite wary of collectivism and totalitarianism, since the powers of which we are warned will seek world domination, and exercise coercive power over conscience and private behavior. Once collectivist structures and institutions are in place, you have what amounts to a state religion. Or, given the right mood, an overtly religious power can simply take over the apparatus that has been put in place.

So my inclination is to be highly distrustful of those who are laying the foundations and putting up the scaffolding for world government, rather than to worry about what political-religious forces will be administering the structure. Now you can reduce my interpretation of current events to partisan politics if you'd like. But the dynamics I articulate are quite consistent with SDA teachings. Who knows? Perhaps it is my conservative Adventist upbringing, emphasizing personal freedom, individual responsibility, and limited government, that informs my eschatology and interpretation of current events. Do you know of any better structural safeguard against political domination by a religious power than a limited government with checks and balances that protects personal freedom of choice?

Nathan, I apologize if you were in any way offended or perceived my comments to be a personal attack on you. My comments were simply meant to be an attack, if you will, or challenge of the linking of your political ideological worldview to your personal eschatological crystal ball.

I remain unclear about your how your views of the Genesis narrative and of the Adventist take of eschatological events surrounding Sabbath and Sunday do not represent rejections of SDA teaching; but suffice it to say that your view that “Adventists have, to say the least, been quite wary of collectivism…” is at best anecdotal, and certainly not doctrinal in any sense. Instead, what this anecdotal view represents is simply an assessment of a particular cultural perspective.

The point being, where would one find official SDA teaching on, or about, collectivism?

Adventism teaches that the safeguards of liberty (against political domination) in America will be dismantled by those religious powers and surrogates who gain and abuse American civil power. These people, whomever they may prove to be, are religious, Christian, and politically successful.
The so-called “reality that people perceive” Nathan, is seldom—if ever—the actual reality.

Nathan Schilt

2 days ago

It's interesting that you mention "official SDA teaching" Stephen. I'm not sure I know what constitutes official SDA teaching. Do you? Surely you don't consider yourself the arbiter of what is official and what's not! And if you do, let me assure you that, as to many Adventist beliefs, you will find that the articulations of them by prior generations of Adventist leaders would be rejected by many of today's Adventist panjandrums. The fact that I don't find the present state of the evidence convincing as to certain theological and eschatological assertions simply means that some elements of the package are unproven to my way of thinking. It doesn't mean that I have rejected them.

Do you really think we should turn a blind eye to "non-religious" authorities that are calling for world government and the dismantling of the institutional structures that protect religious liberty? Isn't it possible, within your prophetic narrative, that non-religious forces could pave the way for the religious powers that you are focused on, so that the religious powers will not need to dismantle anything in order to oppress God's people? Your rejection of that possibility is only slightly less astonishing than your assertion that Adventism's opposition to political collectivism and totalitarianism is "at best anecdotal." That's a bit like saying that Adventists' love affair with vegemite is at best anecdotal. The logical implication of your paranoia about evangelical Christians would have led Ellen White and Church leaders to advocate that Adventists support atheists and agnostics for political office whenever possible.

Let's be careful, whatever we believe, not to project what we believe and teach onto official Adventism's teaching or God's dogma. Isn't the "official Church" burdened with enough baggage?

Stephen Foster

2 days ago

Well, I’ll address a couple of questions. An official SDA teaching is one that is found in something like say…a Sabbath School lesson, or listed among the Fundamental Beliefs, or found in the E.G. White writings, or the SDA Bible Commentaries. I could be wrong, but I am simply not aware of the teaching on collectivism.

This is not to say that any economic system cannot be injurious to large numbers of people; or that political systems cannot be prohibitive of freedom of conscience.

However it is nothing more than an anecdotal commentary of a particular perspective to suggest that Adventists teach this as doctrine. It is not, to my knowledge, factual.

I am not paranoid about evangelical Christians. I am, if anything, “paranoid” about politically ambitious evangelical Christians in the United States. Besides, here is a variation of the old joke about paranoia: you’re not paranoid if they are really out to get you; whether they realize it or not.
Of course, my tongue is in my cheek; just in case you were wondering.

Kevin Riley 2 days ago

An official SDA belief is one that has been voted by the church. Simply appearing in a SDA publication does not make anything 'official'.

Nathan Schilt 2 days ago

Legally speaking, I think you are correct, Kevin. A corporation can only act through its Board. It may be held responsible, on some theory like respondeat superior, for the actions of its officers or employees. But one cannot impute beliefs or tenets to an organization that are not officially adopted by its Board.

Tom 3 days ago

Herb, like you I look at the big picture through the great controversy lens between Christ and Satan. I take exception to betting the farm though, that it will all come about as EGW scripted in the book GC. To me there are too many SDA that follow in lockstep to EGW scenario ala the RCC. The supposed delay in Christ's coming, has produced all kinds of boogyman conspiracies to try and arose Laodecians from slumber and keep the cash rolling in for evangelism. To some there is a Jesuit plot behind everything that besets us today, and all this speculation about the Omega apostasy is just too much.

Just this past week in the Sabbath School class, someone called"spiritual formation" the Omega apostasy. When I challenged him by stating that spiritual formation as I understand it is discipleship with a goal toward kingdom living in obedience to Chirst, he said it was spiritualism plain and simple.

Why are Adventists so quick to denounce anything as spiritualism that they see as not rooted in antiquity and tradition? Even EGW had to battle against tradition in the face of the blessed message of righteousness by faith given in 1888.

Pauls tells us to "Quench not the spirit." I believe some folks are so spooked by anything they are not familiar with that they immediately write it off as omega, spiritualism or some other ad nauseum. A very devout and well read Adventist defined spiritualism as the "pursuit of knowledge without reason, or the examination of evidence." Think about that for a moment and consider that simple position like "God said it, I believe it, and that's the way it is" is an empty headed cliche with no reason or examination of evidence.

God wants us to study to show ourselves approved unto him and rightly divide thre word of truth, not just follow someone else's latest take on what they see as Omega, or whatever.

Horace Butler 3 days ago

If you believe that Ellen White wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, then you must believe that events will transpire as outlined in GC. 30 years ago if someone had predicted the
specific events that lead to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR, most of us would have wondered what they had been smoking. Since we can’t know the future, but God does, it behooves us to not be so quick to discount the predictions given to His messenger—no matter how far out they may appear to us.

If you study "spiritual formation," as it has been historically understood, and as it is practiced today in Christendom, you can only conclude that it includes elements of eastern mysticism, which is a form of spiritualism. Now, if SDA's don't want to be accused of buying into spiritualistic practices, and their brand of "spiritual formation" is different from what is normally understood to be SF, then they need to find different terminology to describe it. If SDA's are embracing something that contains spiritualism, it very well could become the "omega" of apostasy, since the "alpha" (pantheism) was closely related.

Kevin Riley

Historically Christian spiritual formation did not include the elements of eastern mysticism which have only been imported in the last generation. I don't why we need to find new terminology just because some Christians are importing something they shouldn't into spiritual formation. It is like suggesting we find new terminology for salvation or sanctification because some Christians use those words to refer to things we don't believe in.

We should not too quickly discount the possibility of things not transpiring exactly as Ellen White outlined. There are many OT prophecies - made by genuine prophets - which had to be reinterpreted because they did not turn out as originally planned.

I find it interesting that the Indiana movement (the alpha) was essentially a conservative perfectionistic movement, but most people want to apply the prediction of an omega to match it as being a liberal movement. Is it not more likely that the omega will also be a perfectionistic movement? I don't believe we should be looking to the left wing of the church to find that.

Gailon Arthur Joy

And life goes on...Just Keep the FAITH and all else will fall nicely into place and you will be on the right side of the issues and will survive whatever the Lord sees fit to befall you. Even that most dreaded time of trouble.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUREpoter

cb25

Horrace,

You talk about the alpha as pantheism. Have you seen the Kellog Amadon interview?

(Herb obviously has not been around, has not seen it, or does not want to talk about it atm as my question remains unanswered.)
What is your take on it?

Elaine Nelson  2 days ago
Read the Kellogg-Amadon interview and you will be better prepared to discuss pantheism.

cb25  2 days ago
Elaine,

One of the really interesting things to do is compare some of the things Kellogg says in that interview with quotes from EGW writings up to and around the same time. She was using the same terminology, concepts, and ideas...that is until it became unpopular to do so! Even checking her use of the term "soul temple" and the similarities illustrates it.

These people who label anything slightly outside their box or world view as "spiritualism" are often ill informed. The Kellogg pantheism spectre promoted by the Church is often equally misleading.

Elaine Nelson  2 days ago
Kellogg was terribly maligned because he was charged with pantheism and it has stuck for all these years, very unfairly.

There are statements from COL that sound very similar to those which were attributed to Kellogg. When EGW wrote against anyone, he was branded for life in the SDA community. She could build or destroy and did both by her approval or disapproval, she was the law.

cb25  2 days ago
The Kellogg drama was ultimately a power struggle. It was easier to deal with once the Church managed to make it a "doctrinal" issue. As you say, very unfairly.

Kevin Riley  2 days ago
Unfairly or otherwise, all issues in the SDA church tend to become 'doctrinal' issues. I guess it is better than them becoming personal issues. Although, sometimes I think we make everything a 'doctrinal' issue because then we can avoid any interpersonal issues, and it usually excuses the church of any blame. We really are better at handling ideas than handling people.

Herbert Douglass  2 days ago
CB: I do regret that I find it impossible to keep up with each contribution, as much as I would like to. I try hard to find time, at least every other day, and before I go to bed when I do. Your
comments and everyone else's are valuable and worth far more time and space than permitted here.

Yes, long years ago I read the report of the 1907 Kellogg/Amadon interview. Lots of interesting insights. Like all other similar conversations, we have no chance to raise questions or even rebut. Dr. Kellogg was a man whom the White's loved dearly and made it possible for him to attend medical school. Her personal letters to him, that people have seen only years after they both died, were letters that any of us would have cherished as intensely supportive, even when others were treating him poorly. In fact, Kellogg was the chief exponent of her emphasis on health reform (which did not endear him to most of the ministers at that time.) After saying all that and much more, her counsel to him regarding his subtle (and deceptive) theological theories was blunt--and at times, he conceded. So much to say here.

When Elder Spicer returned to Washington in 1901 after his mission term in India, he was astonished when he read *The Living Temple*--that was exactly the thinking he had been contending with in India but wrapped up with biblical terms.

Some ask about Alpha and Omega: In my book *Red Alert*, I devoted two chapters to the New Spirituality--Emerging Church Movement and how to identify it. In a few words, we are not talking about Christian growth based on a personal relationship to our Lord, crucified, risen, and soon to return. The modern Spiritual Formation emphasis aims at experience developed through an assortment of modalities, sometimes called spiritual disciplines. Not all express themselves the same way but the movement emphasized a Christ in everybody and only waits to be found through contemplative prayer, quiet times, conversations with others who also are trying to find the experience. The Bible is not read, if a all, as the Word of God asking for our personal response. Any spiritual experience that attempts to find "God within" without listening to the Word of God is surely a tempting shortcut--sounds fresh and novel. But loaded with deception.

Regarding Catholic, Protestants and Muslims--that's the way I see Rev 16 developing. I have written a chapter on this in *Red Alert*, using materials found in current literature, I kid you not! And when I am asked if the Islam rise to power and a 1260 time period has any part to play in my historio/theologial picture, I have to say that it is interesting--but there is no biblical prophecy that comes close to that picture. IMO. Thanks being patient. Herb

**cb25**  
2 days ago

Hi Herb,

Tks for the comment. Glad you have just been absent, not playing avoidance games. I'll have to mull over it some:

**Tom**  
2 days ago

Horace, if every time we changed the terminology to overcome the guilt by association some Adventists use to counter what they see as heresy simply in a word, we'd be rewriting something all the time. Back in the 1980's there was a Sabbath School Leader's helps publication which was printed quarterly. It was called "Celebration." I was an adult SS leader back then, and I can remember the hue and cry of those who, not even reading it, bought into the notion that it had something to do with "celebration" worship style. It was nothing of the kind.
SDA believe in being alive in Christ with an indwelling of Him through the Holy Spirit. It seems like some folks are so scared of anything that bears the name "spiritual formation" that they would even reword the text, "Christ in you the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27. Even EGW said that although Christ was sinless, He had to FORM a righteous character for mankind to pattern.

Perhaps this should be our greater focus than spook chasing and theological McCarthyism.

Bill Cork

1 day ago

Some thoughts on some of the topics discussed in this thread …

I agree with Herb that there are spiritualist forces within liberal Protestantism, liberal Catholicism, and the New Age movement that have a common agenda. But guess what? Catholics such as Mitch Pacwa, SJ, also are concerned about the New Age threat, and have written strongly about it. I believe that these forces are the thing that will likely dominate in the last struggle, and will prepare the way for the positive reception of messages delivered by apparitions of deceased loved ones, saints, and Mary, culminating in Satan’s final great deception. And I hear conservative Protestants and some Catholics issuing the same warnings. (Some very good critiques of the Medjugorje apparitions have appeared in the most traditionalist Catholic publications).

But I would caution against a too narrow focus on what we think “must happen.” That can give us blinders to very real threats around us.

Back in the 19th and early 20th century, Adventist writings on prophecy were filled with discussions of the role of Islam in history, focused on “The Eastern Question,” and the “Sick Man of the East.” After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Islam retreated from Adventist consciousness as a living threat to Christianity. Interestingly, Hilaire Belloc, in his 1938 book, “The Great Heresies,” accurately predicted a resurgence of Islam as a political force. And in the years before his death, Samuele Bacchiocchi came to believe that Islam is more important in Bible prophecy than Adventists have heretofore thought.

Adventists have not seen secularism or militant atheism as threats. During the Cold War, Liberty said little about the fate of Christians in the Soviet bloc—the denomination was embarrassed by folks like Vladimir Shelkov. The House recently had hearings on the state of religious liberty in America today. No Seventh-day Adventists testified. Evangelicals and Catholics did, defending our American heritage and focusing on the threats of anti-Catholicism, secularism, and political correctness (while the leaders of the major secularist groups, the ACLU and AU, argued that religious liberty must only be allowed to apply to issues of worship). See the links I gave above.

Scripture is full of warnings that the very elect run the risk of being deceived. I think we need to get away from our focus on specific things we fear, and focus instead on the message that God says must be given in the last days: a message to fear God, worship the Creator, and uplift Jesus.
I’ve written about some of the “emerging church” issues. “Spiritual formation” is not a danger—it is a necessity that we properly form the spirituality of our people. Otherwise, they will be susceptible to false forms of spiritual formation. We need to teach them authentic “spiritual disciplines,” not treat “spiritual discipline” as a cuss word. Fasting, Scripture reading, prayer, common worship, Sabbath rest—these are “spiritual disciplines”!!!! But do we teach new converts how to pray? Do we teach them about proper worship? Do we teach them the joys of Sabbath rest? Do we form them in our corporate spirituality?

As to the “very soon reuniting of the Church of England with the Papacy”—no. The Church of England is going in the opposite direction. It has abandoned both Scripture and Tradition. That is why many Anglicans and Episcopalians are leaving the Church of England and the Episcopal Church to form conservative churches and, in some cases, joining Catholicism as groups. Rome is establishing an Anglican ordinariate to govern these groups that have become Catholic. But it is no “reuniting of the Church of England with the Papacy,” but a trickle of folks leaving one church and joining another.

For myself, as an historian, I’d suggest we go back to the sources of the “Great Controversy” theme. Go back to Ellen White’s first accounts of the 1858 Lovett’s Grove vision, especially volume one of Spiritual Gifts. She added much material from her reading of history to expand this for The Spirit of Prophecy and The Great Controversy. And I think we are tempted to focus on the details of those expansions as opposed to the broad strokes that were in the actual vision. I suggest we go back to that big picture as we seek to understand what is most important in those later elaborations.

And let’s not forget all that Ellen White said about speaking positively about other churches, and collaborating where we can with other churches (read Evangelism! read about her efforts with the WCTU!). Some read GC in such a way as to fear common soup kitchens, and imagine that we are only preaching the third angel’s message correctly if we are putting up anti-Catholic billboards. She came down hard on folks in her day who she thought were driven by a misguided zeal untempered by justice or prudence.

I experienced firsthand that Catholicism has not changed as much as some imagined in the aftermath of Vatican 2. It still holds to the supremacy of the pope and the authority of the Magisterium; it still teaches the beliefs of purgatory and indulgences and justification that the Reformation opposed (and these were the beliefs and practices that led the Reformers to identify the papacy with antichrist). It is retreating from the folk and hootenany masses of the 70s and returning to a more traditional liturgy, even allowing any priest who wants to celebrate the pre-Vatican 2 mass the freedom to do so. But, at the same time, it is boldly preaching religious liberty in a way that Catholic extremists such as the SSPX say is a sell-out. It has faithful martyrs who stood up for the Christian faith in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia and Poland and Cuba. It has faithful witnesses who have struggled to keep Christianity alive in many Islamic lands. Let's paint a realistic picture of Catholicism today, not a cartoon. Let's be clear about the differences, but let's not be ashamed of the things we agree on. It's the latter that will allow us to build relationships to Catholics that will make evangelism possible. No Catholic will listen to crude, uninformed, attacks.

Stephen Foster

Once we reject, for whatever reason, the historical Seventh-day Adventist take on eschatological
events, it’s not hard to come up with a variety of end-time players or scenarios. In fact, in such case, we have no choice *but* to look for alternatives.

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<th>Horace Butler</th>
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<td>Brother Cork said, &quot;No Catholic will listen to crude, uninformed, attacks.&quot; Are you saying that the material in GC is of that nature? I don't think the Reformers would take that view, nor would those who crafted our Constitution. They weren't that far removed from the Papal supremacy of the Dark Ages. I agree with Brother Foster. Once you discount our understanding of eschatology (which is based on solid exegesis), you've entered the twilight zone, and anything is possible, from the fanciful nonsense promoted by Timothy Lahaye, to the false prophecies of Harold Camping.</td>
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<th>Bill Cork</th>
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<td>No, I'm not referring to GC. I'm referring to a lot of Adventist folklore that is not from GC.</td>
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<th>David Read</th>
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<td>Interesting about Hillaire Belloc predicting a resurgence of Islam. Was he ever prophetic! Also interesting is the drain of people from the Anglican and Episcopal church. That is an extreme case of ecclesial suicide. Liberal Adventists often talk as if doctrines are barriers to entry, and that we would grow faster if we wouldn't worry about doctrines. But it turns out that doctrines are barriers to exit, and a church--like the Episcopal Church--that believes absolutely nothing has no ability to hold onto anyone.</td>
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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;No Catholic will listen to crude, uninformed, attacks.&quot; Attacks are O.K. only if they are not &quot;crude&quot;? The world is currently less religious (excepting Islam) than it has ever been. The prophetic voices of those 100+ years ago reflected anti-Catholicism as well as Protestantism as it was then. All of those Catholic and mainline Protestant churches are losing members and attendees yearly. Would there ever be sufficient numbers to enforce the mark of the beast for which Adventists have believed and preached for all those years? Is it possible to envision how it might be possible, given the more secular sentiment growing daily? All the polls show there is less enthusiasm for organized religion which does not indicate enthusiasm for any day of worship. When the majority of the U.S. is not found in churches on Sundays, other than Easter and Christmas, to continue preaching the soon combined efforts of Catholics and Protestants in &quot;forming a worship of the beast&quot; defies reason today. I know of no Adventists, other than a few here and there who are even perturbed by such a possibility. It is very far-fetched to engender any enthusiasm.</td>
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<th>Stephen Foster</th>
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<td>It is not necessarily the prophetic purpose of the Advent movement—or of the prophetic Third</td>
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Angel’s Message—to “engender enthusiasm.” Warning messages are seldom generators of enthusiasm.

While it is true that “the majority of the U.S. is not found in churches on Sundays,” it is also true that the majority of the U.S. does not vote. This reality does not change the fact that elections are held nonetheless in which legislators are elected; and that all residents and citizens are subsequently affected by these elections—no matter their involvement/participation.

Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

Truthfully, the situation of today's global economy is far more troubling than SDA eschatology, for while it is held by some, and not all Adventists, to get the world to even listen to such a theory when they are hungry, starving, losing all their pensions is a true exercise in futility. It sounds as if all those posting here are smug in their righteous beliefs and have no understanding of today's real problems.

Tell us: if a man is hungry, out of work, fearful of losing his home, what are the chances he will reach for a book telling him how the world will end? It ends for everyone when they take their last breath and most of those living today will never be alive to see the future so terribly depicted in G.C. A 19th century view of the world is as old as 1,000 years ago in today's rapid changes.

laffal 1 day ago

Elaine,

The troubled economy is all a part of the equation. Whether we agree with it or not, there is a sizeable measure on contrivance when it comes to the global economy. There is nothing "smug" about believing the Bible when it says that you "will not be able to buy, nor sell, unless you receive the mark of the beast."

Give us your exegesis on Revelation 13 to help us better understand how to interpret "today's rapid changes" in the 21st century. Questions / observations without answers is generally meaningless. It's like picking at scabs. Whether you realize it or not, "today's real problems" is what drives this subject. Where will all of what's going on before us lead us? The Bible says that things will not get better in the light of your given scenarios. Do you see it differently? If so, how so?

David 1 day ago

Elaine
people in great are need are the noes who are more prone to listen the prophesies of the Bible than people that have a easy life.

Trevor Hammond 1 day ago

Some stats below show that Protestant America is actually Catholic America:
• Christianity is the largest and most popular religion in the United States, with around 77% of those polled identifying themselves as Christian, as of 2009. This is down from 86% in 1990, and slightly lower than 78.6% in 2001. About 62% of those polled claim to be members of a church congregation. The United States has the largest Christian population on earth, with 224 million Christians.

• With more than 68.5 registered million members, it is the largest single religious denomination in the United States, comprising about 22 percent of the population. According to a new 2011 study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, "The US Catholic population is currently 77.7 million." The United States has the fourth largest Catholic population in the world, after Brazil, Mexico, and the Philippines.

Nathan Schilt 1 day ago

In the Summer of 2009, Pope Benedict issued a lengthy encyclical calling for a world political authority "with teeth": "To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is an urgent need of a true world political authority..."

I wholeheartedly agree with Bill Cork's most informative insights, and the admonitions by him and others to look at the big picture, and not get hung up on the details. But isn't this big picture stuff? There are wealthy, powerful interests and politicians that overtly support the Pope's agenda. Has anyone read Al Gore's Earth in the Balance? There you see a raison and a blueprint for secular and religious authorities to morph their identites under the banner of spiritualism. Many SDAs have a blinkered perspective on the current geopolitical stage. They stand guard around the "Wall of Separation", ready to fire at anything that approaches the wall in religious garb. If anyone points out to them the totalitarians and collectivists razing the structures of privacy and freedom surrounding the wall, they turn into Inspector Renaults. "Let's see their paperwork...Hmm, nope, no Sunday Law activists here; nothing to worry about; ignore it; back to guard duty."

Preston Foster 19 hours ago

Nathan,

As we have been around this barn several times, I will simply point out that the prophecies the Great Controversy narrative are purposefully narrow and do not, necessarily discount the possibility of different players and scenarios around the world. However, the prophetic narrative, as it applies to the U.S., points specifically to a marriage of church and state, with (apostate) Protestants inhabiting the role of the image of the beast. To wit:

Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority. They will be accused of disaffection toward the government. Ministers who deny the obligation of the divine law will present from the pulpit the...
duty of yielding obedience to the civil authorities as ordained of God. In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment keepers will be misrepresented and condemned. A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives.

As the Protestant churches reject the clear, Scriptural arguments in defense of God's law, they will long to silence those whose faith they cannot overthrow by the Bible.

The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17.

The Great Controversy, pg, 597, The Impending Crisis

This identifies a the protagonists as politicians, the beast and the image of the beast -- a marriage of church and state moralists in the U.S. You may not buy it, but at least it is clear.

Those who believe this interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation see, already, clear signs of its accuracy. Asking them to look in other directions is either a distraction or a further leap of faith, based on an unwritten, amorphous, post-dated prophetic scenario that avoids the obvious parallels to the Adventist narrative.

Why look elsewhere when we have fingerprints, motive, DNA, a confession (by the beast regarding the change of Sabbath observance to Sunday) and witnesses? Isn't guilty beyond reasonable doubt enough for you "libs?"

(Sorry, I couldn't resist)

Cheers.

---

Stephen Foster
16 hours ago

What a novel concept…instead of defending the GC narrative, just put it out there and simply have it accepted or rejected!

If you accept it, then it is very obvious that what has been predicted is happening even as we “speak.” If you reject it, then the (scenario and) players you personally come up with will assume the roles that you personally assign.

Well said Preston. (Who are your parents?:)

---

Horace Butler
18 hours ago
Preach it Brother Foster!

Elaine Nelson 17 hours ago

"a confession (by the beast regarding the change of Sabbath observance to Sunday) and witnesses? Isn't guilty beyond reasonable doubt enough for you?

The cock also claimed to make the sunrise. Does that make it so?

No human could CHANGE the sabbath. It was given to the Jews at Sinai. Just ask any Jew today which day is the sabbath and if it has been changed.

Change often comes incrementally. Institutions change, society changes, nations change, change is inevitable and cannot be stopped. The Christian church in the early second century began meeting and celebrating in honor of the Resurrection on the first day of the week. After the destruction of the sacred temple in 70 A.D. there were no longer Jewish Christians of record and the church became, de facto, a Gentile church. By the early fourth century, meeting and celebrating on the first day of the week had become the common day for Christians to rest and the Roman Emperor, Constantine, desiring to unify the Roman Empire, realizing that this day was already being observed by Christians, wanted to make it a Christian empire and ordered the first day to be rest day for all its citizens. It was never made to replace Sabbath, as the Jews were also given freedom, as were all other religions then, the freedom to practice as they wished.

This is the true history, not the one found in Great Controversy. Simply "Google" Constantine and first day. He was also the first ruler to enact religious liberty to the entire Roman Empire to practice their own religion.

Preston Foster 15 hours ago

Elaine,

You copied and pasted it, but somehow managed not to read it. Your reflexes are a bit too fast. My words were, " a confession (by the beast regarding the change of Sabbath OBSERVANCE to Sunday) . . ."

You may deny it for them, but the Vatican claims it did just that.

The Vatican's Mark of Authority

"Sunday is our mark of authority..... The church is above the Bible, and this transference of sabbath observance is proof of that fact." The Catholic Record, London, Ontario, September 1, 1923.

Catholic Catechism

"Question: Which is the Sabbath day?"
"Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath."
"Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?"
"Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, by Peter Geiermann, 50.

So, to paraphrase Richard Pryor, should I believe you or my lying eyes?

You are right, Elaine. No man can change the Sabbath. That is exactly the point. That is why their claim fits the description of the beast ("He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws," Daniel 7:25).

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Bill Cork
15 hours ago

These are sources only Adventists know about. Neither is an authoritative Catholic source. Please find something that Catholics would consider authoritative.

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Stephen Foster
14 hours ago

Bill Cork,

(As I recall, we have also done this.)

I would think that some, if not many, if not most, if not all Catholics would agree with Wikipedia that "The Catechism of the Catholic Church (or CCC) is the official text of the teachings of the Catholic Church." With this being the case, allow me to once again refer to its very text:

Sunday—fulfillment of the Sabbath

2175 Sunday is expressly distinguished from the sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God. For worship under the Law prepared for the mystery of Christ, and what was done there prefigured some aspects of Christ:107

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.
Elaine Nelson

You emphasize **OBSERVANCE** which is the word used in the Catholic quotation.

To believe that the Catholic church changed observance of Sabbath to Sunday is to deny that for nearly two millennia Christians had been observing Sunday. How can a claim of changing a day be believed when it has been practiced previously for 2,000 years!

The SDA joined the Christian "band wagon" to promote anti-catholicism, a factor in 19th century America, beginning then. The Catholic statement you quote is dated 1923. Bill Cork has written that there was anti-Judaism in the early centuries of Christianity just as anti-catholicism was prominent in the U.S.in the 19th and 20th centuries when EGW wrote the G.C.

Preston Foster

"You emphasize OBSERVANCE which is the word used in the Catholic quotation."

Is this an affirmation or a question? The more we seem to agree, the more problems you seem to see.

Anti-Catholicism is a red herring. I believe Catholic people, along with those of other faiths are loving, people who are God's children. The beef is not with the believers, but with an organization that calls men "Holy Father," and claims authority to change or ignore what God Himself sanctified. It is how we got to be called "Protestants." We have theological disagreements -- as you have with Adventists. Does that make you an Adventist bigot? I also have a beef with some Protestant believers who forgot what they were protesting. We have, like the title of this article says -- and prophecy predicted, blended.

Elaine Nelson

"Google Kenneth Strand and Sunday Observance" for a detail history of the origin of Sunday as a rest day.

Kenneth Strand was professor of church history, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, and editor of Andrews University Seminary Studies, when this article was written. He has edited, compiled, or authored many books, including Interpreting the Book of Revelation, A Panorama of the Old Testament World, and A Brief Introduction to the Ancient Near East. He aided in school planning for several overseas colleges. Copyright 1978 by Kenneth A. Strand
Bill Cork 16 hours ago

Sunday was clearly being observed in the second century, arising in Rome and due largely to anti-Judaism, as documented by Samuele Bacchiocchi. It was associated with the observance of Easter Sunday, dissociated from the 14th of Nisan, which also had anti-Jewish rationale (just read Constantine's letter to the bishops who weren't able to attend the Council of Nicea). Folks have been wanting to cleave Christianity from its Jewish roots for a long time, starting when Gentile Christians wanted to be free from Rome's antipathy towards Judaism, continuing with the supercessionism and deicide and "blood guilt" of the Middle Ages, on through liberal scholars like Harnack, to theologians who supported National Socialism, notably Kittel and Althaus. This anti-Judaism paved the way for Christian acceptance of 19th century German "scientific" antisemitism. Yes, Sunday was made to replace the Sabbath. When Sunday is defended in early Christian writings, the Sabbath is denigrated. Jews are the object.

Stephen Foster 15 hours ago

Elaine,

(Needless to say, we have done this.)

The Sabbath—in reality—was not changed; indeed, neither could it ever be. Nevertheless, it has been, and continues to be, a teaching of Rome that the Sabbath should “no longer” be observed; and that INSTEAD Sunday, a day whose observance is of pagan origin, should (now) be considered holy; in commemoration of the resurrection.

God considers the Sabbath a commemoration of creation; and a reminder of the Creator.

Elaine Nelson 14 hours ago

Stephen, do you believe that Christ inaugurated a New Covenant? Was there any difference from the Old Covenant made with the Israelites? If any, what was the difference? What did Paul mean in his letter to the Galatians about the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ and now the He has come, we have no need of a schoolmaster?

In all the explanation given to the Christians by Paul (the Gospels were not addressed to Christians), where is there a command to obey the LAW? What Law was Paul referring to? Why did he say that no one should be judged on a day they observed? Why did he say no man should judge another? Were pagan Gentiles previously observing Sabbath? In the instructions for them where is Sabbath ever mentioned?

Stephen Foster 9 hours ago

This is what I believe Jesus came to do regarding the law: Matthew 5:17-22.

This is what I believe about the covenants: Romans 10:3-10, Galatians 2:19-20, Galatians 3:4.

This is what I believe about Paul regarding (and what he taught about) the Sabbath: Acts 17:2,

And this is what I believe about the difference between the Jews and the early gentile Christians: Romans 10:12-16, Romans 11:11-24.

We are now to obey God out of love, not out of legal obligation. As we walk in the Spirit, the Lord will direct our steps toward obedience. It is a matter of the heart.

We are not to judge anyone about anything, including a day that is observed; everyone should be personally persuaded in this regard. The problem comes when someone actually teaches and/or demands disobedience to any commandment.

The Sabbath, in my opinion, is only an issue if and when we are ever taught or commanded to disregard it.
Back to the Good Old Days

Submitted Oct 25, 2011  
By Lawrence Downing

For several years my wife and I lived in Central Pennsylvania. A drive through near-by areas provided opportunity to observe the Old Order Amish and various branches of the Mennonite groups, including the Black Bumper Mennonites. Members of this sub-group, unlike their Old Order Amish cousins, drive cars — black cars. Everything on the car is black, including the chrome bumpers — earning the label ‘Black Bumper.’ Any other metal is also painted black. Area car dealers specialize in ‘sanctifying’ [my word, not theirs] the new models that come out to assure nothing bright is visible. Black indicates an attitude of humility; bright colors are perceived to be a sign of worldly pride.

In the fields around Bird In Hand, Intercourse, Lancaster and other towns, one can watch the farmer direct his horses and plow down the rows of grain or corn. At harvest time, the horse drawn harvesters bring in the crops. On occasion one could see men swing their scythes and watch as the grain was hand-gathered into sheaves. Time seemed stilled in the Amish community. The men wear black baggy pants with buttons — zippers are forbidden; wide-brimmed black hats, and light blue collarless shirts. Beards are in among the Amish. The women wear long, blue or black dresses with perhaps a wisp of white trim. On a woman’s head, covering her hair, was a small white hat tied tightly round the chin. A few wore large dark colored hats, but these were the exception.

On weekends the roads in Amish Country are jammed with outsiders, tourists, who have come to see for themselves this quaint society, marvel at their industry and marvel over the prosperous farms and tidy towns. There is not doubt the Amish community thrives without our modern conveniences. The Outsiders, as Amish call tourists, also take advantage of Amish cooking traditions. They eat their full from family-style tables. Amish are known for the variety of ways they prepare pork and for shoofly pie.

The Amish are a striking example of the power that is group identity. They have made a decision to withdrawal from the world and its corruptive ways. They maintain a viable community that fulfills their social, political and religious needs.

There is no harm in valuing group identity. However, is a hold to the past, or the perceived past, consistent with what scripture teaches is a disciple’s priority? Are we to follow the voices that call us back to what is proclaimed to be a more pristine and righteous time?

It is instructive to remind ourselves when someone calls us back to a better time that frequently perception and historical reality do not match. This is not to say that the past has no value.

The past does have value and historic events do provide a context to help us understand the present. Ellen White’s statement that we have nothing to fear so long as we do not forget how God has led us in the past is valid today as in yesteryears. However, it is well to remind ourselves that we cannot recapture the past. We also note that accounts of past experiences or events are frequently based more in wishful thinking than reality.

When people tell me about the good old days and wish we could go back I ask, “What period of time would you like to trade for our day.” Answers include: The times of Jesus, or the 1950s, or the early 1900s when our church pioneers lived.
“Great,” I respond. “Let’s go back to Jesus’ time. You have a good chance of being a slave. You will be uneducated and live from hand-to-mouth. You will die before you are 50.”

“You want to go to the 50s? Fine. No antibiotics so you cannot fight many of the germs that afflict us. You’ll have to fight the Korean War. If you are a person of color, get used to the Jim Crow laws.

“Now, you want to live when the pioneers lived? Let’s do it! You will believe you are saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. You will probably be an Arian — you will believe Jesus was a created being and not equal with God the Father. You will believe that the door of mercy is closed to those who did not accept William Miller’s Advent call.”

About this time the person cuts me off. “This is not what I mean. I want the good things that were there in those times, not the bad!”

“Were it so simple. You take the bad with the good. Still want to trade?”

“No, I guess we better stay where we are.” I agree!

Among some Adventists today the call back to those good old times when we really knew who we were and understood our purpose and were confident of what we believed has great appeal. Unfortunately, the siren call arises from a made-up world that exists more in imagination than fact. Read the early Adventist publications and you will find evidence that all was not smooth sailing among the early believers. Church leaders and members had serious disagreements about what they should believe and how they should behave. The arguments over the law in Galatians created significant controversy that pitted church leaders against one another and Ellen White.

Whether Adventists should serve in the Civil War stirred up all manner of heated discussion. One segment of the church concluded that open marriage was a biblically accepted practice. Other groups were religious enthusiasts — we would today call them Holy Rollers or Charismatics. They yelled, rolled on the floor and created public disturbance. The Holy Flesh component believed they could not sin. There was also the fanatic fringe that crawled about on hands and knees and babbled baby talk — in response to their interpretation of the biblical passage that said we are to become like little children. Are these the days and practices the voices call back to? When we call for reformation and a return to those good old days, we might well take care to define what it is we’re opting for and not reach back with blind eyes. What we grasp and hold to may be less desirable than first thought.

Join in the discussion:

William Noel

Lawrence,

Thank you for a thoughtful reminder that the past is not always what we think it was and wishing for it won't satisfy our needs today.

God has not called us to live in the past, but to move forward into the future of a closer relationship with Him where we are guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform ministries that did not exist in the "good old days." So, given the choice of which direction to look, please, don't anyone...
tell me about how good it used to be and how bad things are today because I'm enjoying my walk with the Holy Spirit.

Elaine Nelson

Thanks, Lawrence.

This puts it in perspective as I have also heard the same comments, and whether asked or not, the answers you received are typical. Often, when these wishes are voiced, it is a wish to return to the happy days of childhood: no worries, life is all play, you are fed and cared for by parents. Ask their parents if they would like to have a reprise of those "good old days" and one might hear a different response.

The Amish do not proselytize, and their numbers are increased only through births. Adventists who have been called to make converts, would be just as hampered as the Amish if they continued living in "the old ways." When there is no progress, a people, an institution and a nation soon die.

The call proclaimed at the latest Annual Council sounds much like a call to the old ways--"Return to ideas and thinking of the 19th century. This would be a death knell to the church if it were truly followed.

Horace Butler

The only true "good old days" were those few days in the Garden of Eden, before Adam and Eve sinned.

The call at the Annual Council was the same as that given by Ellen White--a return to primitive Godliness. The Church of Philadelphia, that is, the one that represented the time period prior to and during 1844, was one of only 2 which received no condemnation. That's something to think about. No one is suggesting returning to 19th century thinking in the way that you're presenting it. What they are suggesting is a return to a commitment to present truth, which seems to have fallen by the wayside of late. But I sometimes forget that these concepts are not popular here, since so many reject the SOP, and much of what is contained in the three angels' messages.

William Noel

Horace,

I've lost count over the years of the number of times I have heard calls to "return to primitive Godliness." Unfortunately, the callers typically are advocating a return to their particular concept of "primitive Godliness." Many times they can't even describe it. So, when Ted Wilson calls for it, I have to ask for his definition. So far, I haven't seen much to color inside his general lines.

We can render the whole issue moot and save ourselves a huge amount of argument over definitions by simply returning to the Apostolic model in scripture for how the church was to be first, foremost and always guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. God is waiting for us to rediscover such empowered vitality.
Could it be safe to say that "primitive Godliness" is what John was speaking about when he heard the Angel say that the "mystery of God should be finished"? Revelation 10:6,7. So what would that mystery be? "God manifest in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16. What was lost at the fall, is to be restored thru the plan of salvation, the image of God in man. Colossians 1:27.

There is an inherent link to the Apostolic model in all of this. To "rediscover such empowered vitality" envolves being totally honest with ourselves and God when it comes to our relationship to him and each other... until then... we will continue to strive and debate with each over what all of these things mean.

Yes, the Apostolic model involves being honest in our relationships, but that is merely one result of each believer being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit and the harmony found in the collection of believers (the church) resulting from the role the Holy Spirit plays in each person's life.

No, there weren't any good old days. As for the Amish, I believe they have a place in being part of God's witness in these times. It is not for everyone, but they attempt to preserve a way of life that is simpler and, to them, closer to God. It is an inherited lifestyle and not a bad one. Like all groups, they have a minority of dysfunctional families and people, but in the main they are a happy and honest group. They had a profound witness to the world as they forgave the murderers of their children in the school shootings of a few years ago. My father came from Old Order Mennonites or Black Bumper folk, and they were kindly Christian people.

For me I want to be part of a group that remains relevant and progresses with the truth that is in Jesus. In the last days the Bible says that knowledge shall be increased, and I believe that is spiritual and biblical knowledge as well as secular knowledge. At this time, God has and is giving the church wonderful tools and witnessing methods by which we can glorify Him and know Him better. We are even learning more about taking care of our health and well-being and coping with the stresses of modern-day living. And there are more and more ways to love people all over a shrinking globe.

I think we all need to have an example that reminds us that acquiring 'things' and living a life of ease is not what this life is about. I don't want to live as the Amish do, but I do need to be reminded that this life, and this earth, is not all we will ever have. I do also want to participate in life, and I enjoy the pursuit of knowledge. I just need to remember to do that with and for God.

I must say here that I have had many good experiences growing up in a traditional Adventist home.
with lots and lots of fond memories of a good happy childhood experiences in the home and at church. Whilst they are what they are, just memories, they have influenced our outlook and way of life in an undeniable positive manner, which I think is great. So what's wrong to reminisce the 'good old days'. I think that's just great to be able to 'feel' some of the nostalgia and pleasantries of the past. Maybe others don't have good memories and therefore seek to avoid them: that I will understand. My mom and dad remarkably, never had a fight or used harsh words or language at each other all the years I have known. I suppose that's why my mom and us miss my dad (and my older brother) so much since they were called to rest. Death does have a sting in this life; but the 'death where is your sting' does emerge when one considers the wonderful memories of the 'good ol' days' which death can never take away from us. The good ol' days tell us just that, and more, this side of heaven: yeah death, where is your sting!
♥T

Gailon Arthur Joy 3 days ago  Reply

The past may have had it's problems but the future will be the test of the Ages!!! Unless we find a way to build Foundations of Faith that the pioneers adopted, we will not get through that most critical and trying of times.

It is easy to see that many "purported adventists" will be our greatest trials and even now ply their venomous and faith destroying ways. Beguiling, but faithless religion is their trademark and their wares and we must beware of the many wolves in sheeps clothing in our very midst.

Your Foundation must be the Bible the Pioneers built THIS CHURCH upon and cling solidly to that Faith regardless of the false messages designed to undermine that Foundation of Faith.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

Elaine Nelson 3 days ago  Reply

"We have met the enemy and it is us."

Nathan Schilt 3 days ago  Reply

As I see it, the problem with going back to the future is that it usually involves an attempted return to a snapshot of a theologically conceived construct which was part of an irretrievable dynamic process. It is much easier to build a hermetically sealed wall around reality as the Amish have done. But we have spent too long in Babylon as a Church to abandon the institutions we have built there and go back to some imagined Eden. Institutional concerns preclude radicalism. Whether they allow room for God's Spirit to lead us into truth for our time remains to be seen.
“The pesharim are commentaries upon prophetic texts, which apply the biblical writings to the history and life of the community. The commentators aim to demonstrate the fulfillment of biblical prophecies in their own time, especially with respect to reward and punishment, and they assert the imminent doom of their opponents in contrast to their own salvation. This “contemporizing” interpretation, or application, of the text is called “pesher,” a term related to dream interpretation.” ([The Virtual Qumran](http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=902&action=print))

Pesher is a method of interpretation used as a solution, usually to a contemporary situation. There are several methods of Midrash (exposition) interpretation techniques. These methods of rabbinic exegesis can range from clever and fanciful, to simple plays on the number of letters in a word, but what they most have in common is to bring the Biblical text to deal with some element of contemporary thought that the expositor is interested in talking/writing about. (See the article on Jewish Interpretation here for examples)

Once clued into this concept it is not difficult to see it is used fairly commonly in the New Testament. If you are like me you have often wondered how the Apostle Paul could say in one place that sin came from the woman and in another that sin came from the first man. Roman 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (All texts NIV). 1 Timothy 2:14 “And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.”

The verse from Roman 5:12 has taken on a life of its own, in particular when it comes to those who hold that there was a literal recent 6 consecutive 24 hour day creation. All death must have therefore come after the sin of the one man, therefore the fossil record and dates cannot possibly be true, and there can be no other methods allowed to explain the how of creation. The problem with this is that we are taking the “Pesher” of Paul to a conclusion that is not his intent. His application of the verses is to entirely different subjects. Take a look at the context of 1 Timothy 2:12-13: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”

The Pesher there is certainly questionable; does the creation order really have anything to do with the ability of a woman to teach or speak or have any authority? This is a common conclusion given our modern standards of interpretation and the product of years of debate and study by Christians, philosophers and scholars.

Paul was certainly in good company. For example, Clement of Alexander, when writing about the Mosaic prohibition of eating swine and certain birds says “The sow is the emblem of voluptuous and unclean lust of food…. The eagle indicates robbery, the hawk injustice, and the raven greed.” There is a reason behind his application of a particular bird to a particular human characteristic. “Clement of Alexandria and Philo represent two adherents to the Alexandrian school, which believed that each word in the Biblical text was chosen for a precise reason.” Against their view was the “Adherents to the Antiochene methods of interpretation include the following: Eusebius of Caesarea, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom and Basil of Caesarea” (The explanation of the Antiochene school is more varied and too complex to describe here, see the article Antiochene
Methods of Interpretation

The fact is we interpret things much differently because of the battles between the various schools of thought in the Christian church, from the Early Church Fathers on. Just as knowledge in most all areas of mankind has advanced so too we have advanced in methods of interpretation and analyzing written works. When we re-examine Paul on the subject of Romans 5, we can see that he is not saying there was no sin before the first man, but is instead working on his contemporary theme that Jesus brings reconciliation and that Adam was the pattern of the one to come.

Romans 5:14 “Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.” But it is not a pattern as we typically understand; it is a reverse image pattern. It is a contradistinction between the failure of Adam and the success of Jesus. Romans 5:15 “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!”

The subject is not “there was no death before Adam sinned”. Instead, the subject is the reconciliation provided by Christ, contrasted to the failure of Adam (and all human beings). The powerless man was reconciled by the gift of God in that even when we were yet His enemies, God, through the incarnation of Jesus, reconciled us back to Himself. When we take the text out of this context and purpose and assign it a significance that it should not have we revert to methods of interpretation that cannot be reconciled to the age of reason.

There are Jewish expositors that could take any text and cleverly manipulate it to work for their own purposes. I dare say Adventism still has those kinds of people and those who use those techniques, but they ignore the reason and science so necessary to really create a comprehensive hermeneutic. There is an art and science to Biblical interpretation.

William Noel 1 week ago

Ron,

I appreciate your closing line that "There is an art and science to Biblical interpretation." Historically our church has been highly scientific in looking for evidence to prove particular doctrines and viewpoints. However, this approach often runs afoul of life experiences where we discover that things work a bit differently and we are confronted with the art of interpreting the Bible. The art requires that we step outside the limited world of fact-based faith into the experiential world of knowing God on a more personal basis through the Holy Spirit. It is when people insist on sticking to the science of Biblical interpretation that their spiritual experience becomes rigid and often leads to spiritual death. It is when we experience the art of interpretation that we learn to apply scripture and faith flowers.

cb25 1 week ago

Ron,

Appreciate your point. There has been much use of Paul's perspective on a few threads to "prove" points against death before sin etc, so I find this very interesting.
I've pasted a line from your blog below and wonder: Do you think it is possible to replace your use of the word "text" with the word "Bible"? If not, to what degree, or with what methods, do we determine the limits? I'm not trying to bait you, it just seems so relevant to so much of the way scripture is used here by some, and "ignored" by some others of us (at least in their opinion:)

"When we take the text out of this context and purpose and assign it a significance that it should not have we revert to methods of interpretation that cannot be reconciled to the age of reason.

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Jim Miller  
6 days ago

Somehow, Paul never gets as radical as Pesher Habbakkuk (one of the 1sr Dead Sea Scrolls published). But he is clearly doing pesher.
A very important, and somewhat disturbing pesher of Paul will be coming up in Galatians. In a few weeks we will be studying how, "there is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male and female . . ." However, soon after that Paul does a pesher on the slave woman Hagar which seems to deny the validity of Galatians 3:28. I encourage my class to read Galatians while imagining themselves to be a 1st century gentile, female slave, then a 1st century male Jewish freeman. Imagine the gentile female slave reading 3:28, and wondering if this could possibly be true, if Paul really meant that. Then read the Hagar passage through the same eyes, Would she now come to understand that Paul didn't really mean all that?

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Elaine Nelson  
6 days ago

If anyone ever gave mixed messages it was Paul. Very difficult to explain or develop his theology combining all his sayings.

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Ron Corson  
6 days ago

To cb25:
"When we take the Bible out of this context and purpose and assign it a significance that it should not have we revert to methods of interpretation that cannot be reconciled to the age of reason.

No I don't think it works because Bible is too large, there is no way to assume there is a context that covers the whole Bible. Things have to be narrowed down and somewhat specific to even have context. After all what is there to take out of context in a history book that covers 4000 years of history. One part might have context to the Crimean war and another to the Great Depression, so if I say you are taking that book out of context what do I mean? We have to be more specific to really communicate.

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Nathan Schilt  
6 days ago

Thank you, Ron, for this informative and provocative blog. Absolutely top notch!! And AMEN. There are many possibilities for reconciling the inescapable realities of our experience in the material world with a transcendent, personal, creator God who reveals Himself and His Truths through the stories, symbols, poetry, and exhortations of Scripture.
Fredy Reinosa  
So the issue is that our dear friend Ron wants to support the idea that death existed before the fall. And his way of getting around that is by discrediting those texts that would prove that.

Fredy Reinosa  
And you want people to take you serious, right? What do we do with the Genesis account of creation? and with everything that the bible says that the Messiah would do? save people from their sins.

Ron Corson  
One has to realize there are problems with the no death before sin even within the Genesis creation story. For instance they eat. The act of gobbling up fruit or veggies will mean cellular death. Even if you assumed that the cells merely transformed into the humans body the very fact of chewing is going to physically destroy some cells. Not to mention that the sheer geometric growth rate of bacteria would cover the world in several feet of bacteria before Adam could have finished naming all his animals in the one day. Which comes out to conservatively be taking less than one second per animal to make it in one 24 hour period.

So ultimately though the blog is about Paul and not Genesis it is true that because the verse in Paul is used to pretend things are there in Genesis the two are related, nevertheless it is because the facts cannot make sense to the story that we spend the time on these issues. The Genesis story does not rule out death for other things. It's use of death even for the humans is even exagerated. as in the "day that you eat will surely die" is idiomatic for when you eat there will be a consequence, that consequence did not follow on that day or even very soon. So we need to be careful with the assumptions we insert into the Genesis story.

Elaine Nelson  
We forget that the stories in Genesis are "accounts" as reported by the writers. No one was there to actually report on what occurred. And even then, it was reported through their understanding at the time.

Such things as a dome covering the earth; that there could be a separation between night and morning when there was no sun nor moon until the fourth day, and a complete reversal of the order of creation recorded in Genesis 2. Trying to harmonize the two accounts will never lead to consistency. If acceptance that God is the creator is somehow insufficient, how can anyone claim to have been an eyewitness and dispute anyone else? Every reader is interpreting as he reads. Why is it insufficient to say that God created this earth and humans? How He did it has not been shared with man--as we wouldn't understand anyway.
Nathan Schilt 3 days ago

May I recommend most highly a video by Rob Bell of the Mars Hill Church in Michigan. It is entitled "Everything is Spiritual". Bell profoundly informs and reminds, by illuminating the poetic beauty and symbolism contained in the first chapter of Genesis, of the enormity, complexity and infinitesimal smallness of our universe. He reminds us that the story with which God has gifted us mostly tells us how amazing God is and how amazing we are; and how, no matter what we think we know, the dimensions of reality hinted at by the creation poem overwhelm and transcend our time-bound notions. He also creatively binds together, within the creation narrative, the Sabbath as a memorial of creation and the Sabbath as a memorial of freedom from nature within the cycle of nature.

The video is incredibly faith affirming for those who are not afraid to look and imagine beyond the boundaries of parochial linear thought processes.

JaNe 1 day ago

*But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.* Mark 10:6 Doesn't leave much wiggle room for cell subdivision to eventually "evolve" into gender reproduction over eons of time....

But hey, just like if maybe God lied in Genesis 1, then maybe Christ lied in Mark. Or maybe some intelligent mortal could re-interpret the words of Christ in some new hermen-whatever-itical way. Or we could delve into "dream interpretation" or maybe spend all day reading Chrysostom and gaining insights from a 4th century man who is credited with Christian anti-semitism. Or maybe we could all dream our way to Mount Athos and meditate on a relic there of Chrysostom, his right hand. Maybe that will give us some light into interpreting Paul. Or maybe we could celebrate one of Chrysostom's 4 feast days in the Eastern Orthodox Church, kinda like some SDA Churches on the west coast now celebrate Ash Wednesday with Catholicism....

Or we could just take the advice of E.G.W. and let scripture interpret scripture. Or as Isaiah says... *For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:* Isaiah 28:10
Adventists have a proud heritage as people of The Book. Our doctrines were hammered out by long hours of study, discussion, and prayer, until our pioneers and early church leaders were confident ‘we had the truth.’

While many today would suggest these doctrines were based on a ‘proof text’ method of study and are flawed, the process and approach used is of great interest to us.

**Definitions:**

I have a fairly simplistic way of applying *a priori* and *a posteriori* to thinking:

- An *a priori* belief is something I have accepted as truth without seeking, questioning, or examining any evidence. (Whether it is or is not available)

- An *a posteriori* belief is one I have accepted because after careful examination of the most possible evidences it presents a compelling case based on the weight of that evidence and data.

In defending an *a priori* held position we select evidence that fits our view, while often blindly ignoring data that would cast doubt on our assumption.

In *a posteriori* testing a position, belief or theory we lay aside, as best we can, the presupposition that it is correct. Having done this we set out to gather as much data as possible to test its validity.

**Our Heritage:**

For our Adventist Pioneers, the Bible was accepted *a priori* as the authoritative source of material from which to form doctrines. This view reflected the culture of the day, wherein nearly everyone saw the world through Christian or Theistic eyes and for most, the Bible was granted an almost unquestioned authority.

It was a different matter when it came to studying out doctrines. Doctrines long held without question (*a priori*) in their previous faiths, were now exposed to *a posteriori* scrutiny. Instead of beginning with an *a priori* statement, to a large degree they began with a question, a possibility. They examined this in the light of Scripture, compared text with text, and passage with passage until the weight of evidence, as they saw it, compelled them to forge a new doctrine. True, the outcomes were certainly coloured by their overall way of seeing the world, but they did move forward and outside of previous thinking.

This kind of change was possible because they shifted from a mindset of defending a position to testing its validity.

**Our Challenge:**

What does this mean for us? We have a history of finding ‘truth’ by gathering data and evidence and following the weight of that evidence. This is essentially *a posteriori*. We accepted the authority of
the Bible *a priori* because that was the dominant culture of the day. Not so our doctrines.

We today live in a culture and generation where the Bible is no longer taken as an authoritative source of evidence in a quest for truth and meaning. The debate has moved back a level. It is no longer over truth *within* the Bible, but whether the Bible should serve as an authority at all.

Adventists (and most Christians) believe *a priori* the Bible is the ultimate source of authority. If we wish to defend such a position, surely we must now demonstrate *a posteriori* that we have valid and defensible reasons for doing so. We were prepared to do this to form and defend doctrines. Why not for the Bible?

**We must shift our thinking from defence of an *a priori* assumption to a willingness to test our position with honesty and humility.** Can we regain our passion for searching out truth and apply it to the new challenges of our day and culture?

Perhaps the most powerful contender as the source of meaning and ‘truth’ is nature. What is, what we see, information from science, what we experience, and who we are. The force of this issue is increased by the implication that much of what nature ‘says’ appears to be in disagreement with what the Bible says. This is especially true in the area of origins, creation, and sin.

As a Church with a history of defining truth *a posteriori*, how are we going to respond to this shift? Are we going to have the same openness that our pioneers had and examine this new challenge *a posteriori*? Or are we going to cling to our *a priori* assumption? Such a position was fine when it was the accepted culture, but is this enough now? Hardly.

**So far the indications from leadership suggest we are going to hunker down with our *a priori* presupposition that the Bible (and our interpretation of it) is and always will be the final authority in these questions.**

This time the dynamics have changed. Our pioneers were moving out of churches and forging an identity, seeking truth, growing and changing. Change is easy when you are on the front foot. This time we are a Church, we have ‘the truth’, and growth and change will come at a cost. We are now on the back foot. A position from which we are far more likely to defend *a priori*. Polemic, not pragmatism.

What would the outcome be if we did demand that the Bible's right to authority be put to *a posteriori* scrutiny? Indications are it would be demonstrated as an indefensible position. What would this do organisationally and theologically?

On the other hand, what will be the cost if we do not face whatever the outcomes of scrutiny are? An entrenched Young Earth Creationist position which risks becoming irrelevant to increasing numbers of people?

Would it not be more honourable to *a posteriori* examine our sources of truth and move with the weight of evidence? If this means allowing nature to be an ultimate authority in meaning, then the sooner we build an apologetic for God and faith from that position the more relevant Christianity may be able to remain.

I am going to suggest that this decision may be forced upon us sooner than later. Take a look at this illustration in how technology changes as an example:
 WIRED editor, Chris Anderson talks about the four key shifts that occur with most new technologies. First, it comes down to a price where everyday people can afford it. Then it reaches a critical mass in everyday use, and quickly begins to replace existing technology. Finally, it becomes close to free because so many people are using it.

In this example, take technology as an illustration of how people see life and the dominant mindset they are exposed to. First, few people are aware of it, then it reaches a critical mass where everybody knows about it. (Think today’s global village with the Internet and access to a growing wealth of information about the age of earth, life, and evolution). Finally, it becomes so common the thinking of every person is shaped by it.

Is this how it will be with nature, evolution, the origins of man and the meaning of life?

If so, will Seventh-day Adventists hunker down oblivious to, or worse, denying the shift in thinking around them? Or will we examine the evidence as to the validity of granting the Bible final authority, and if necessary, build an apologetic for faith on the new paradigm before it's too late?

One could almost suspect the longer we, or Christians at large for that matter, hunker down and refuse this challenge, the more credibility we will give to atheism and the like. We risk appearing out of touch with reality, and failing to offer a compelling alternative apologetic for faith.

Can we *a posteriori* hammer out a new apologetic within the framework of this paradigm shift?

I submit we must. I also submit we must do this from understanding what IS, rather than from what is not (God of gaps), or from a Book who's previously granted authority will prove indefensible.

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**William Noel**  
1 week ago

Chris,

Well said!

I think you missed the first step in the technology shift cycle: the ability to envision the future and create a product or capability people do not yet realize will benefit them.

Let's look for a moment at the differences in thinking between a technical innovator and a spiritual explorer a bit deeper. Common first responses a technical innovator gets to a new idea are: "You want to do WHAT?" and "What makes you think that's going to work?" But we've seen enough innovation in recent years that we have come to expect that challenge will be overcome and how we live will potentially be changed by it. In contrast, the spiritual explorer is most often greeted with suspicion and even the accusation of heresy for interpreting scripture through their personal study or their experience with God as compared to the stated opinions of theologians and church leaders. Unfortunately those accusations silence explorations that could change our spiritual lives for the better.

*A priori* thinking defends the traditionalism of the past and condemns exploration while *a posteriori* thinking is the vehicle we need to carry us into a growing relationship with God.
Kevin Riley

Is it possible to defend the Bible from a position of what works, rather than from nature? It seems that that is more in tune with how people approach ideologies of any kind. Would we be in a better position to demonstrate that what the Bible claims actually works in Christian churches?

William Noel

Kevin,

I have found that defending the Bible from any perspective other than my personal testimony about what God has done in my life is fruitless. People can argue nature and verse against verse all day, but to what benefit? They can dismiss the stories in scripture as evidence of God working in past ages, but my testimony about what God did for me or through me yesterday or last week is very hard to argue with. Yes, they can reject it, but it presents them with a loving, active and empowering God who is at work today-- and who promised in the Bible to do just that.

cb25

William,

I like your observation. While you and I may approach this from differing angles, I asked David Newman a question (not yet answered) further down the thread about how the world would look different if God intervened frequently, infrequently, or not at all.

I followed the question with a statement which had the intent of pushing our thinking in a similar direction as I sense from your point. Here's the statement:

"I suggest you will find most signs of God's activity on a spiritual level in your heart....and very few in the natural world."

I don't want to hijack your point, as you may see the natural world differently, but I think its an area undervalued.

I also note that the book Kevin alerted us to appears to lean toward this in saying religion is more natural to humans than science. I suspect I would disagree with that in the sense that I see both as natural to what it means to be human and it is not an either/or. However, I think the area/theme of what is "natural" to us, and the heart/spirit emphasis is where more of our apologetic appeal will end up coming from.

Thanks for your point:)

Kevin Riley

I believe more people are interested in whether the Bible claims can be fulfilled in their lives than in whether prophecy is fulfilled or the account in Genesis is scientifically accurate. So personal testimony, what people see in the lives of the local church members, and how the local church lives as a community are always going to be more powerful reasons for most
people than any intellectual argument. If it works, they will accept the theory, if it doesn't why should they?

Kevin,

Not sure where others are at on these points, but I think the drift of your points has a lot of merit.

Can I ask you a question to help me work through some of the ramifications of the points you make?

From what you and William are suggesting, the emphasis is on faith and a personal experience with God. (yes subjective but...) How far do you think this experience can be separated from doctrine, especially the strong emphasis we SDA's have on doctrine?

Second to that and perhaps to clarify it: How far can it be separated and still "work", to use your word? Which of course raises the key question: What is it that "works"? How do we define, share, create that etc?

As you know there was discussion on this type of thing on another thread. Also, we had Peter Roenfeldt here the other day, and he shared with us some info on the "new" groups of believers/churches he has been involved in. I didn't get to ask, but it seemed to me that doctrine was definately not a prime focus of most these groups. But, to use your word, it seems to work.

It seems to me that what "works" can be distilled down to something very simple. So simple that it can indeed fit into even, dare I say it, theistic evolution?

I'd be interested in what you think.

Cheers.

cb25, 1 week ago

I am also very interested in answers to the questions you ask. It seems that they are much more important than those that are usually discussed.

How important is our subjective experience to the entire area of Adventist theology?

Because new and different doctrines are the essential reasons for the origin of Adventism, do "right" doctrines truly play the reasons new converts are added, and why second, third, and fourth generations remain members? Does the institutional church really know? Would it not be essential that it is known?
Most new additions to Christian churches in the U.S. are not drawn to "doctrinal purity" but to churches that are welcoming, offer family-type extra services: marital and family counseling, financial advice, and other benefits that the early church gave to its members.

Were the early Adventist converts convinced of the doctrines? Is that the same reason given today? Has such a questionnaire or survey been done? Unless it has been, do we have the information needed to increase membership? Is the official statement of creation a pivotal doctrine for new converts?

Kevin Riley 1 week ago

I am not sure how far it can be separated from doctrine in practice. I think most people are more interested in basics - if they follow what the Bible teaches, will they be better and happier people. If our doctrines are truly just a systematisation of what the Bible teaches, then you obviously cannot separate the behaviour that arises from following what the Bible says and the doctrines that systematise that teaching.

One of the churches Peter Roenfeldt has been involved in is in the next suburb, and many of the people involved came from the church I attend. I know doctrine is not the focus, but I know most of the leaders and they are orthodox in terms of doctrine.

William Noel 3 days ago

There is a great tension in the Adventist church between doctrine and experience. I was taught doctrine was first and foremost and that all experience had to be measured by the doctrines. So learning to trust God today was a real challenge for me. I have found it a very enhancing experience because I can look at things and see additional dimensions that were not visible to me before.

What it all comes down to is the question of if we will trust what God reveals regardless of when or how He reveals it. What was revealed in ancient times does not mean what God reveals today or teaches us in our individual experience is different or wrong. Rather, the amazing thing is the great harmony between the two because it is the same God who is leading and teaching us.

cb25 1 week ago

William and Kevin,

William, yes...great first step, and it makes so much sense when applied to the possibilities of the future.

Kevin, I kind of like your point, but perhaps with a shift of focus?

I think you are right, we like what "works". One problem I see is that whatever "works" from the Bible should not (must not as I see it) contradict nature. Because of this I would reshape your first question more like:

"Is it possible to defend what works in/from the Bible without contradicting nature?"
I think the answer to that is yes. I know this gets back to a point you are not comfortable with, but to me the bottom line of what works from the Bible is that God Is, love God, love one another. Perhaps as William alluded to elsewhere walking in the Spirit.

Beyond that, we get all tied up over doctrine, right, wrong, etc, and I think on that level many would say the Bible's claims don't actually work in churches. I think what does work is people find God and faith, but then we bog it down with much that does not work, and is in denial of what the world around us says.

Cheers.

William Noel
3 days ago

Are we perhaps equating lack of understanding with "not working?" There are many things I do not understand and cannot explain, but the same God who created this world is guiding me, so why should I consider something that I do not understand to be a situation where something does not work? Or, is my concept about God or nature wrong?

David Read
1 week ago

It is certainly possible to step back from taking for granted the authority of Scripture, and make arguments that Scripture is indeed the inspired word of God, as it claims to be. Many Christian apologists have done this, and are doing it, and their work is often available on the Internet. A necessary assumption behind the idea that Scripture is the word of God is that there is a God, so you might want to step back from taking that for granted and examine the arguments for the existence of God. Turns out that many Christian apologists have also made arguments for the existence of God, and their work is often available on the Internet.

When you get done with stepping back and making arguments, you'll discover that while there are many good arguments, none of them are airtight. You cannot prove that God exists and you cannot prove that the Bible is His inspired communication to humanity. But you can believe those things on faith, and be satisfied that your faith is a reasonable faith.

The situation with origins is no different. The Bible clearly teaches that the world was created in six literal days (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 20:11) a few thousand years ago (see, genealogies of Gen. 5 & 11). There is plenty of data from nature that can be interpreted to support this position, but it cannot be proven. It has to be accepted on faith, and, after having examined the evidence in reasonable detail, I find that faith to be a perfectly reasonable faith.

Of course, evidence interpreted according to mainstream scientific assumptions is not going to be very helpful to the believer, because those assumptions are explicitly and very militantly atheistic. "We cannot allow a divine foot in the door . . ." That is why creation science is necessary to the believer who wants to be able to show that his faith is reasonable.

What Chris is actually advocating is that mainstream scientific interpretations of the data, which are of course explicitly atheistic, must be preferred over the Bible when the teachings of the two conflict, as they clearly do on origins. This position accepts the premises for the total destruction of biblical faith, because atheistic science will conflict with Scripture not only also on origins but on
miracles, the resurrection of the dead, including Christ as the firstfruits thereof, the existence of angels, the efficacy of prayer, the work of the Holy Spirit, and every other supernatural aspect of the Christian religion. Whenever it is once accepted that atheistic science prevails over the plain teachings of Scripture, the game is over in principle. The rest is just the sad, slow unwinding and eventual collapse, of exactly the type we are seeing in mainstream Protestant denominations. The Adventist Church does not want any part of that.

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

Nature declares the Power and the Glory of God as Creator: the Cross declares His Love as Saviour (Ps 19:1, John 15:13). Science (the *a posteriori* kind) observes how 'the ball rolls': The Bible (by faith) reveals WHO 'rolled the ball' (Rom 1:20, Heb 11:1). Science makes NO provision for sin but the Bible does and this is where science is limited in terms of what the Bible offers. The Bible makes no claim to be a scientific paper but it IS a 'paper' of God's love and His plan of salvation for reprobate mankind. When an unobserved *a priori* belief system like evolution gets passed off as *a posteriori* then the essence of science is lost. The Bible as the written 'Word of God' (Luke 4:4, Acts 17:11) still stands as the authority of the Christian Church... well at least as our church sees it.

♥T

cb25 1 week ago

David Read and Trevor H,

David: Evolution is NOT atheistic or theistic. It does not set out to answer the questions of God and His existence or non existence.

Trevor is right here, science only seeks to answer the question how rolls the ball? I agree with you Trevor, on WHO rolled the ball.

What we disagree on is the HOW. I am no longer prepared to deny the world I observe as the best commentary on how the ball rolls. So, I will glean from the Bible and any other source information about WHO and what that means for me, as long as it does not leave me denying what is around me.

As for the "unobserved a priori belief system..." I take it you are alluding to uniformitarian issues/questions.

*Without bringing the Bible's description of events into the discussion: Show me some evidence that would suggest things are NOT essentially the same today, yesterday, and back into the distant past!*

Standing by...
Chris, what makes science atheistic is not its position vis-a-vis God and His existence, but its position vis-a-vis the world. Science assumes that the world came into being through natural processes, without divine guidance or supernatural intervention of any kind, and formulates its theories and hypotheses accordingly, and then interprets the evidence according to those naturalistic, materialistic theories and hypotheses.

If science would first set out to enquire, with an open mind, whether or not God exists, that would be a great leap forward. But as you correctly state, science does not do that. It just assumes that either no God exists, or else to exist is all that God has ever done, and that there is no creator God. It then makes its theories about origins pursuant to that assumption.

When Trevor called evolution an "unobserved, a priori belief system," I think he was referring to the materialistic, naturalistic philosophical aspects of it, which are, indeed, a priori. It would not be fair to refer to individual hypotheses of mainstream origins science in this way, since they do incorporate valid observations and data points, but the driving philosophical imperative to supply a materialistic origins narrative---and exclude a supernatural, biblical narrative---most certainly is a priori.

Interesting that this topic came up the same day I got advertising from Oxford University Press for a book that argues that religion is more natural to humans than science. Unfortunately I have spent my book budget for this year (and next year) already, but some of you may find it worthwhile. http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/?view=usa&ci=9780199827268&cp=30329

I will have to wait until it is on special at Amazon in a year or two.

Kevin,

Looks like a good read...

David, maybe Trevor can qualify what he meant before I respond to both points..?

Cheers

So were back to where we were on another related blog. There seems to be an assumption that those of us who don't believe in evolution (as it is understood and taught by mainstream scientists--who do not allow for a divine foot in the door) and who believe that the earth is about 6000 years old, have left our brains outside the door and have our heads in the sand, refusing to examine the evidence. Nothing could be further from the truth. I've been studying this subject for more than 40 years. I'm still waiting for the evidence that would convince me that the earth is millions (billions?) of years old; that all life evolved from simple to complex; and that there was
death before sin. It's not there, no matter how adamant its proponents may be. The evolutionists have built a magnificent edifice, but it's foundation is on shifting sand, the roof leaks, and the walls are made of paper mâché. Though they don't want to admit it, one of the weakest leaks is the lack of transitional forms. There are a few which are claimed to be transitional but there is no consensus on those. If they were true transitional, it should be obvious. If evolution has been occurring for millions of years the vast majority of fossils should be transitional in nature. Instead, we have a few disputed candidates. The hypothesis of "punctuated equilibrium" is a face saving cop out to get around this unsolvable dilemma.

Thomas "Vastergotland" 1 week ago

Plants are interesting to study. When I took a class in systematic biology, the objective of the first lab was to order some 40 herbaria sheets into piles representing an unknown number of species. Some sheets were easy to separate, while others might equally easily have gone into either of two piles. If you can't tell for sure whether a individual plant belongs to SpeciesA or SpeciesB, and the choice ultimately is up to your discretion, the question of transitionals somehow lose some of its tooth..

Horace Butler 1 week ago

Using that same standard one could conclude (as is done with the contrived "horse evolution" myth) that all the dogs we see today are transitioning from small (Chihuahua) to large (Great Dane). But we know better of course. We know that they all had a common dog ancestor. The same explanation fits the plant scenario you presented. Plants appear to be much more prone to cross breeding and diversification than are creatures which rely on active sexual reproduction (as opposed to passive). New "species" are easily created by cross pollination. I don't think we begin to understand the depth of genetic diversity that God built into the original "kinds" that He created.

But the presence of plants which appear to be intermediate or transitional does not provide an answer to the conundrum of the absence of transitional forms in the animal kingdom.

Thomas "Vastergotland" 1 week ago

The point of the example was that the boundaries of what a species is, is floating and subjective. And, if you cannot objectively tell what the boundaries of the species are, can you objectively tell when a specimen fails to fall within such a boundary?

Kevin Riley 1 week ago

If God created using evolution (something I prefer not to accept) - or at least long ages - would we expect transitional stages, or would he make 'adjustments' now and then? I agree that atheistic evolution has a problem with the lack of transitional forms, but what about theistic evolution?

cb25 1 week ago

Kevin,
I suspect punctuated equilibrium would fit very well with theistic evolution.

Horrace, I'm hardly sure how to respond to you now....I have come to where I am because so much I see in the world around me just does not fit a young earth and global flood. My convictions about that began long before I began to search science trying to find answers. Most my searching began with creationist material.

I totally believe I have done my absolute best to a posteriori address the issues. In doing that I now refuse to a priori give the bible or science unquestioned authority. In spite of what David said above, I think assumptions will eventually stand or fall if one does enough honest research.

Which leads me to conclude that most of us Christians are almost unable to put our glasses aside and really see what is around us through unbiased eyes.

Must run, others may have better....

J. David Newman

CB25
Thank you for clarifying where you stand on the authority of the Bible versus the authority of nature. You write: "If this means allowing nature to be an ultimate authority in meaning, then the sooner we build an apologetic for God and faith from that position the more relevant Christianity may be able to remain."

and then you end with: "I submit we must. I also submit we must do this from understanding what IS, rather than from what is not (God of gaps), or from a Book who's previously granted authority will prove indefensible."

Alright let's go with your thesis that nature is the primary way to understand the Bible. And the "Book who's previously granted authority will prove indefensible."

This means that creation did not take place in six literal days, there was no universal flood, an axe head did not float, Samson did not pull a building down around himself, the sundial shadow did not retreat 10 steps, a dead man did not come back to life when his body touched the bones of Elisha, Jesus was not born of a virgin, Jesus did not rise from the dead, Jesus did not raise Lazarus from the dead, there will not be a new earth without sin and death, Rev 21 and 22 are not to be taken literally.

This is the logical conclusion we must come to. The Bible then is no different than other ancient writings. So I can discount any notion of sin and the need for a Savior. So Chris, there does not seem to be the need to discuss the Bible any further since nature has shown it has no authority. Which means this should be a very short blog.

Darrel Lindensmith

Pastor Dave, Just had a chance to read your suggestion for a new approach at apolegeitics. Right on the money! I work on a university campus as head of the ID Adventist Campus Ministries and I know that if Christians these days are not able to use an Evidence Based technique in explaining our faith we
The success of the Morman Church will counterdict what I am saying I suppose but at least ministry on University Campuses requires Openness and Hard Factual Reasons for our faith to be credible. The return of Natural Theology in philosophy and science is one welcome reaction to the ambiguity of post-modernism.

Part of the ambiguity is seen in our discussion here. Evolution means so many different things to different people. It is like in our church—"adventism," means something a little, sometimes allot different, to different people. The purest academic view is that evolution says nothing regarding God or Ethics. For some this is true. All I know is the definition or take home message that the students on my campus learn is not this. As Dawkins has stated: "Evolution is the engine of Atheism." For many this is the case.

As the late Stephen Jay Gould, wrote: “Before Darwin, we thought that a benevolent God had created us,” after Darwin, “biology took away our status as paragons created in the image of God.” Ever Since Darwin, pg. 33, 147 and 267.

As Kenneth Miller and Joseph Levine explained in the fourth edition of their popular textbook, Biology. They explain that evolution is “random and undirected” and occurs “without plan or purpose.” Biology pg. 658 (these words were deleted in later editions).

As Douglas Futuyma’s biology test puts it: “By coupling undirected, purposeless variation to the blind, uncaring process of natural selection, Darwin made theological or spiritual explanations of the life processes superfluous.” Evolutionary Biology, pg. 5.

I would never say that if you believe in evolution you are not a christian or atheist. The first problem with saying such a thing is that "evolution" means so many things. The second problem is, or maybe this actually is the major one, that is that Jesus said, "Do not judge others!"

But as David has said we are going to be forced to look at our misunderstandings of Genesis and attempt to rethink our a priories as we interpret God's word.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Why, after all these years has Adventism made of a 6,000 year, 6-day creation the ultimate test of orthodoxy?

This is a new approach as for the nearly 2,000 years of Christianity it was never remotely a concern. For those who are adamant for either position it's an either-or proposition: either you accept fully the literal interpretation of the entire Bible, or accept the new discoveries of science--all of them.

This presents a real dilemma: there is doubtless no one who believes that the Bible should be taken literally for its every word--inerrrant and infallible; but selectively choose which parts are to be trusted just as written, while others understand the various genre and context with which any ancient writings should be subjected.
The more persistent voices for YEC become, the less valid the entire Adventism will be for the younger and much better educated generation. If this is of any concern, as it should be, it would be well for the church and its pastors and spokespersons to de-emphasize such a controversial subject. The Creationists wish to make it an SDA doctrine that is inviolable and foundational. The more stringent and tightened the boundaries are drawn, more will be excluded:

"He drew a circle that shut me out,
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle and took him in."

It's a choice that is worth considering.

Elaine, I hear your concern but your point is not really the subject of this blog. As I understand what Chris is trying to do is to talk about the broader issue which is the authority of nature versus the authority of the Bible, if any. Until we can agree there we will never come to any agreement on the particulars.

Until we shift our way of thinking on this and other subjects, we will never come to an agreement on this, of other concerns. Is it possible to consider that if God is the creator of our natural world, or nature, that the writings of humans are more authoritative than the Creation? We do interpret both, don't we? The Bible writers certainly gave their views of the natural world. Are we not to do the same? Are their views more, or even the final authority of nature???

It gets worse. Some evolutionist/atheist said that we are just nuclear waste or stardust. The whole concept of evolution is, at its core, anti-God and therefore anti-Christ. Theistic Evolution is contradictory and also therefore illogical. Mainstream evolutionists readily debunk this concept with pretty good arguments in terms of their a priori belief system. To posit that we base our Biblical understanding on the 'call of nature' is unbiblical and borders on blasphemy or strange doctrine. The Christian Church was NOT built on a 'fossil' rock; but on the ROCK Jesus Christ!

All truth is God's truth. Biology, Physics, Theology and Geology. The truth that God has spoken in the writings of Scripture for me Is substantiated by fulfilled prophecy and hearing God speak to me in the teachings of Jesus. The correct way to interpret truth is to make a gestalt of all the above studies--to bring a unity out of the diversity. Classical education, before deconstructionism,
attempted to bring unity out of the diversity, thus 'University.' I think it would be wrong to take
Nature first as the key to understanding scripture, but if I know for example that the Universe was
created millions of years ago through factual observation, then why would I attempt to interpret
Gen. 1:1 make it say otherwise. Obviously I would simply have misunderstood Gen 1:1; my a priori
must be adjusted, but Scripture has not failed.

J. David Newman

Elaine, now you are on the central issue. The bible claims it is not just men's thoughts but a
revelation from God (2 Tim 3:16; 1 Peter 1:20, 21). Most evangelical theologians agree that God
reveals himself in two ways: Special revelation the Bible, dreams, direct voice, and general
revelation, nature. This is what Chris is wanting us to discuss. If we say that the bible is not
special revelation from God then nature is the only way to truly know how God acts. This is why I
posted earlier that if we adopt this position then the bible has no authority even when it comes to
salvation issues since there is only one overall authority, nature.

There is no point in even trying to discuss whether the Bible has any authority when we discount
any talk of the supernatural in the Bible. Because of our a priori beliefs by definition the Bible has
no authority. If science reigns supreme there is not really anything to argue about in the bible, we
already know what might be true and certainly what is false. Because whatever contradicts nature
must be false.

Elaine Nelson

What place does science have in human knowledge? Did Galileo, Pasteur, and other discoverers
add to man's knowledge? Were they studying nature? Did the Bible writers have a far better
understanding of nature than humans today?

It appears that if the Bible were to reign supreme then all the knowledge gathered in the past 3000
years or more might find itself discredited by the Bible if it trumps science. But if science reigns
supreme does that automatically discredit all of the Bible? Why is science suspect if it is SEEN as
contradicting nature? Do humans have the totality of nature, or is still only barely understood?

If we take the Bible as the final authority, does that infer that it is the final authority beyond which
there can be nothing new that may contradict the Bible be thrown out?
Is it possible to believe that both the Bible and science may be compatible?

If science does not reign supreme in certain areas such as medical situations, is the alternative to
consult the Bible for answers? Where and in what areas is the Bible supreme and what areas is
science supreme? Or, as Gould suggested, and I fully believe, they are two entire separate areas
and can neither be compatible or should they be. The Bible answers questions such as: Who am I;
what am I to do; and where am I going. Science has no answers to these nor does it attempt to
answer them. Just as math or physics does not even address such questions. Why must religion be
injected into such subjects?

Trevor Hammond
We must remember in all of this evolution hoo-hah is that Gen 1:1 does NOT say "In the beginning was there a semi-evolved hydrogen atom which evolved enough become an atom and ready in the right time and place to burn in the 'gas cooker stars' which had enough heat to even produce heavier metals like 'gold' which coveniently landed on planet earth. All this out of pure chance x time x natural non-intelligent changes x natural selection x time x time x ...

Then we still will have to deal with the 'death BEFORE sin' theory which has NO biblical OR scientific basis. Evolution theory has no answers to morality, sin, human existence and God. The Bible has.

♥

Thomas "Vastergotland"  1 week ago

I have seen the suggestion made by different people that the sin that brought death into existence was the first sin rather than the first human sin. I have also seen this suggestion ignored. Why is that, I wonder? Is the argument so bad that it would be below the dignity of a historic adventist to comment on it, or is the argument so good that any comment on it would demand a discontinuing of the "no sin before death makes evolution impossible" line?

Trevor Hammond  3 days ago

What are you saying is been ignored?

Trevor Hammond  1 week ago

Although the blog title premise says one thing, I find that the direction of its posit is more in line with 'Think the way you Shift'. This is the direction of Cultural Adventism's progress which has as far as I can see, has evolved. I will have to concede evolution in this regard.

♥

J. David Newman  1 week ago

Elaine, you write "Or, as Gould suggested, and I fully believe, they are two entire separate areas and can neither be compatible or should they be." That would be helpful if it were true but it is not. The Bible does not tell us just the Who and the Why. It often makes assertions of fact about the scientific world (eg. origins, miracles, etc.) Neither does science limit itself merely to questions of How. It also deals with origins. It tells us how things began which is a matter of faith. If the Bible has anything to say about salvation it is predicated on the arrival of sin, thus we need a Savior, which gets into the origins debate and whether there was a historical Adam and Eve. Like most of life it is not so simple. And that is why the premise of Chris, the writer of this blog, is so important that nature trumps everything else.

cb25  1 week ago
David Newman,

Hi, for what it is worth I carefully chose the word "an" not "the" in the quote you use. Note the difference:

"....allowing nature to be an ultimate authority in meaning, ..."

Also, I speak of the "previously granted authority proving indefensible. What kind of authority is that? The ultimate authority.

I do not say it has no authority.

Also, you are doing the "baby bathwater" thing. I do not think I have said anywhere that miracles cannot happen. I do not believe there was a special creation of all in 6 days 6k ago. I do not believe there was a global flood for a host of reasons, some of which I put in my other blog.

BUT: It is you who have jumped from my discounting of those significant, but questionable (no eye witness) events to the assumption that therefore nothing miraculous can happen and that God cannot intervene in any way.

Take a look at this world on a natural level and tell me:

"How would it look different if it were to look like God actively intervened: a. frequently or b. infrequently, or c. not at all?"

I suggest you will find most signs of God's activity on a spiritual level in your heart....and very few in the natural world.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago

“Think the Way You/We Shift” is, or would be, a brilliant re-working of the title for this (well-written) blog by Chris. (This is courtesy of Mr. Trevor Hammond.)

Biblical apologetics cannot literally apologize for the fact that is faith-based. We are not to be “conformed to this world” in order to reach the world with a message of other-worldly transformation of mind renewal. (If you can’t win them, join them?)

J. David Newman 1 week ago

cb25

I apologise if I judged you too harshly. You write "I do not say it has no authority." To help me not jump to hasty conclusions about your belief please help me understand how the laws of science can debunk creation in six days but do not debunk an axehead that floats. You write "I do not say it has no authority." OK, please help me understand from your viewpoint what authority it has and how you understand some miracles taking place but not others.
Thomas "Vastergotland" 1 week ago

Events that take place in the real world leave evidence of different kinds behind them. One axehead temporarily floating would leave very local and temporal evidence whereas the creation of the world would leave very thorough and unmistakable evidence. On singular events happening 3000 years ago which produced no archeological remains, science can say nothing. Creation is different. There are predictions to be made on how a world created by the God we find in the bible ought to look like, and predictions on what it ought not look like. There are predictions on what the geology should look like if a one year worldwide deluge took place. These predictions can be tested. Are the predicted results observed? Why? Why not?

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

If one is to accept all the supernatural events described in the Bible, did they cease when the canon was closed? Should we expect such supernatural events today, and if so, when, where and have they been authenticated?

Many "miracles" have been reported over thousands of years and were not at all out-of-the ordinary in the time when the Bible was written. There was also belief in miracles since that time, and still in certain areas of the world, but have been much less frequently reported in first world countries. On another SDA blog there have been many reported incidents of talking bulls, and angels appearing and disappearing. Why do the majority of these reports occur in far-away places, some even told from pulpits?

How is this different from Catholics who believe in the healing power of Lourdes or the Guadalupe vision or Fatima? Should they be compared?

laffal 1 week ago

Elaine,

"How is this different from Catholics who believe in the healing power of Lourdes or the Guadalupe vision or Fatima? Should they be compared?"

The Bible gives us the answer to your question:

- Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1 ESV)
- For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 ESV)
- For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:7-10 ESV)
- Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke...
like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. (Revelation 13:11-14 ESV)

Not all miracles / supernatural events can be attributed to God directly. Satan will all of his God given wisdom / power uses these attributes to deceive those who are presently living upon the earth. In the book of Job Satan is the one who creates all of the natural disasters that strip Job of all his family / possessions.

"Satan will USE all of his God given wisdom / power"...

David Newman,

I'll respond to your request, but I anticipate you will attempt to answer my questions a, b and c too.

First, let me say this: I am not here because I have all the answers or fully formed conclusions/solutions. I am sharing what I do because of two things:

1. Observation of the natural world tells me it is very old and life has come to be what it is through an evolutionary type process.

2. For various reasons, some subjective, some not, I believe God IS. I also assume he does/can intervene.

I see a vast gap between a YEC/YLC position (much of adventism), and atheism. Both to me lack credibility.

In being here I hope/d that rather than the constant extreme position taking by some, we could actually say "ok, if these things are/were so, and the earth is old and evolution is/were true, how can we describe God, Faith and a gospel within that?"

Again, I don't have all those answers...and it looks like little help will come from genuine brainstorming here. I did appreciate Kevins question about theisic evolution. There have been few genuine questions here, most are just reflecting reactions from a position to be defended at all cost.

Now. your question:

The axehead! The axehead left no evidence. It may or may not have floated. It is not normal to do so, but if God is and he chose to so be it.
Creation is a different story: There's a "body" at the scene of the crime!! I/we can examine the data and reach conclusions about how the world and life got to be as they are. If it doesn't look miraculous and supernatural it probably isn't.

What authority does it (bible) have? Significant shafts of light. All light whatever its source will be congruent and non contradictory. (someone will no doubt suggest miracles are contradictory of nature. Yes, that's why if they happen they are the exception not the rule).

Why some miracles and not others...

Why do we presume all the miracles of the bible are true when today, after calvary has supposedly solved the GC, there are major disasters, diseases, deaths, tradgedies, etc etc. and God appears to do nothing?

If there is good evidence a miracle happened - accept it...if the evidence suggests it may not have happened as people thought - reject it.. Loose ends? Sure...I'm not here with all the answers, but I do see very clearly the problem we have if we don't recognise how our world is....

Stephen Foster
1 week ago

Chris,

If you “see very clearly the problem we have if we don’t recognize how our world is…,” would you mind telling us precisely what “the problem” is?

If there was a weak logical link in your blog, it was “Our Challenge.” Why should it be considered a “challenge”? What is our motivation? Is it to scientifically prove that God exists, or that the Bible was inspired by Him—scientifically?

Joe Erwin
1 week ago

Science is a way of seeking and evaluating evidence. So, there is actual physical evidence and measures of events, that is, there are qualitative descriptions and quantitative data. People (imperfect people) then try to explain and understand the information available. Sometimes they perform experiments (designed and structured manipulation of independent variables and measurement of the consequential changes in dependent variables). Again, they wonder and guess about what the results mean. They form hypotheses and develop theories. They test the hypotheses and theories, and if those are falsified, they are revised or discarded. Every scientifically derived explanation is at risk of being replaced by a more adequate explanation. And that is how science makes progress. Scientific questions are addressed by obtaining additional information. Once in a while, some state of knowledge is uncomfortable for those who have all the answers in advance (or think they do). Scientists learn to hold knowledge very gently and tentatively--but some scientists are a lot better at this than others. Some are as dogmatic as the most dogmatic religionists.

Perhaps the best position, whether one is a scientist or is religious (or both), is to not extend their
level of confidence too far. But how far is too far? On the one hand we have a highly authoritarian epistemology that is filled with assertions and explanations about the world and its origins. i.e., a system that claims absolute authority over all knowledge IN ADVANCE, versus a system that relies on evidence and is self-correcting. One is absolutely dependent on belief in God. The other neither denies nor affirms God. Science is not atheism. Science simply does not address magical or supernatural or spiritual explanations. That is not the same as saying that God cannot or does not exist.

Stephen,

I'm not sure I understand how you missed the problem? We interpret the Bible to say the world and life as it is came to be in one week 6000yrs ago. Study of the natural world suggests this is not so. Is that not a problem?

Challenge? From the blog, key point in bold:

"We today live in a culture and generation where the Bible is no longer taken as an authoritative source of evidence in a quest for truth and meaning. The debate has moved back a level. It is no longer over truth within the Bible, but whether the Bible should serve as an authority at all.

Adventists (and most Christians) believe a priori the Bible is the ultimate source of authority. If we wish to defend such a position, surely we must now demonstrate a posteriori that we have valid and defendable reasons for doing so. We were prepared to do this to form and defend doctrines. Why not for the Bible?"

Joe, thanks for your comment and rational observation:)...

Cheers

Adventists (and most Christians) believe a priori the Bible is the ultimate source of authority. If we wish to defend such a position, surely we must now demonstrate a posteriori that we have valid and defendable reasons for doing so.

Maybe the short answer is that it is not our job to demonstrate a posteriori as defendable reason for holding the position that the Bible still has the authority as the sacred record of human history and this world. There are a couple of reasons off the top of my head that I can give that will speak to my point.

1) It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convict / convince / convert others to Bible truth, not ours. Your position in this blog by default diminishes the Holy Spirit's ability to reach those who are looking demonstratable evidence... which can never be a good thing. 2) As long as there is the abundance of disunity / schisms (theologically, doctrinally, exegetically, ... etc.) in the Christian Church that there is today... we the a posteriori of God is invalidated. The problem is not with the
Bible, it's with us... we keep looking for evidence to validate our way of thinking outside of the scriptures which testify of Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life... who says follow Me and I will MAKE YOU fishers of men...

laflal 1 week ago

correction...Your position in this blog by default diminishes the Holy Spirit's ability to reach those who are looking FOR demonstratable evidence.

J. David Newman 1 week ago

cb25

I really really appreciate your humility coming through in your answer to me. You are not an all for nothing person. I am a very left brain analytical person so I was simply trying to show what the conclusions one would arrive at if they gave nature ultimate authority and the bible none. In your response you said you believed in some miracles, which I imagine would include the virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, and a new earth. You have not worked out how you decide which of these supernatural events science says cannot happen and which can.

Those who believe theistic evolution have an insurmountable problem--the issue of evil. Why would a good God build into his creation right from the beginning tooth and claw, the survival of the fittest. I have not found those who believe this way have a good answer including Francis Collins on his site biologos.org.

When I read the Bible I get an answer. God created his universe and this world perfect but Lucifer rebelled and because of this rebellion and the excise of choice things changed. Those who were promised that they would never die now would die. This means that some fundamental laws had to change because of these choices. That is why I don't believe that we can trust the laws of nature to explain how we got here.

Scientific dating methods are build around two unprovable presuppositions: (1) that the original conditions were pure and uncontaminated and (2) that they rate of change has not fluctuated since the original conditions. These are just two of the many unprovable presuppositions evolutionists use to prove their theory. That is part of the reason I do not trust nature to explain everything that goes on around us. I don't have all the answers either. Years ago I thought I did but not now. All I am trying to understand now is the very core of the issue and that is presupposing a God how did sin enter the universe and why did God become a man and why do we need a Savior. Nothing else really matters because if I do not believe in God and have not entered into a personal relationship with him I will not spend eternity with him. As Jesus said, "What does it profit a person if they gain the whole world but lose their own soul." And that is why I have said before in the end the only presuppositions, beliefs, that matter are those that bring me closer to God. If theistic evolution does that then I am not going to argue against you. I count you as my brother because we all children of God. God bless.

cb25 1 week ago
If we take your suggestion that it is not our job to demonstrate a defendable reason for giving the Bible authority as the sacred record etc, then, can I ask...

Why do we have all the creation type ministries doing their utmost to provide evidence that the YEC/YLC positions/interpretations are defendable? Seems to me the passion these ministries have demonstrates they are not prepared to leave much to the Holy Spirit in that field.

If it is not our job to provide well reasoned explanations for our faith in both our understanding of scripture and the authority we give to it, then lets take Hebrews 8:11 more seriously:

No longer will one man teach another about the Lord, they will all know me... Shut shop, stop evangelising, stop digging up every possible reason why creation is right or wrong, etc etc.

I do think we take more responsibility than we should in some of these things, but we have minds and I suspect they are best used.:)

Cheers

Elaine Nelson

1 week ago

"God created his universe and this world perfect but Lucifer rebelled and because of this rebellion and the excise of choice things changed."

Are you extrapolating ex post facto the parts of the Bible (Revelation) that was written at least a number of centuries later, and inserting it on the introduction of sin into the Garden? Nowhere in that original story, or centuries later was the Serpent ever connected with Lucifer, a label given the "bright morning star" in Isaiah, Ezekiel and in Revelation.

Is it the usual pattern to ignore the time something is written and add much later information that was unknown at the time when the story was written? When was the serpent dubbed "Lucifer" and when was the serpent given as the beginning of sin? Weren't the first couple the initiators of sin by disobeying God?

As a note: the same word "bright morning, sometime "evening star," has been defined as Lucifer and in Revelation it is God.

cb25,

Personally, I believe there were / are people who believe that the YEC/YLC position / interpretation needs to be defended. I'm not necessarily sure that either side of the creation of our world / universe can actually / adaquately defended. Yes, God has allowed man to peer into the wonders of His creation. Science has developed many wonderful tools to accomodate the mans investigative spirit. But any way you shake it... faith is needed to come to any of the available conclusions. So I can agree that anybody, on either side of the question, can become so defensive
minded that the room for the Holy Spirit can be narrowed significantly.

Yes, I am to give a reason for the hope I have thru my understanding of / faith in the scriptures. As to the authority of the scriptures... it claims that for itself as the word of God... I don't have to push it... that's where the Holy Spirit comes in to do His work in leading any / all willing into the knowledge of the truth.

In the context of the Hebrews 8:11, we have the basis for the reason there will be no need for one person to teach another... the New Covenant made with the House of Israel / Judah... the church. The fulfillment of this covenant in the experience of God's people will affect a witness that will eventually reach the world population in total. Throw a stone in a pond, and concentric circles will reach out to every part of the pond's shore. This will not happen all the while we are in a defensive posture... no matter what the doctrine.

It's my job to witness, it's the Holy Spirit's job to teach:

- I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie--just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. (1 John 2:26-28 ESV)

As to stop digging up every possible reason why creation is right or wrong... Why is one digging in the 1st place? To prove someone right, and someone else right? I'm not sure that this is way God wants us to approach any matter of investigation.

To be honest Chris, with all the variables available on the creation science / evolutions sides of the question of origins / age of the planet... I'm not so sure that a consensus will be achieved any time soon on either side as long as the investigation is framed in the form of a debate, or as an absolute. We just can't do that. But I do know what the Bible says:

- For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:20-23 ESV)

How on earth can we with our finite minds explain the infinite God and His eternal power? When it comes to this... we do need to shut up, sit down... and be amazed. Because it is this power that God has committed to us in the salvation of our souls from every aspect / effect of sin. Romans 1:16.17; 1 Corinthians 1:17-25...

Peace
but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Hebrews 1:2,3 ESV)

If by the word of His power, Jesus Christ holds everything together in the universe, I don't see how even a Thiestic Evolution model fits... but that's just me.

Maybe at the end of the day... we just struggle with the idea that the Bible is more than a book of stories... but actually the word of God which, when the Holy Spirit is given the freedom by him who believes the scriptures, to do what He does, that word IS JUST AS CREATIVE in its own right as was the spoken word in creation. But that's the issues isn't it... we don't believe that God can / will / did speak to nothing, and then there was something in perfect order / harmony. Hebrews 11:3; Psalms 33.6.9

I want to join Stephen in the "hunker downers."

Thomas Vastergotland,

I notice your comment higher up about plants and transitionalis. Yes, plant life is one place transitionalis are perhaps much more identifiable, and perhaps demonstrable. I found some very interesting material on that just the other day. Can't find the link now:(

Cheers

OK Chris,

I certainly understand why you don't see how I could have missed "the challenge." In questioning, I personally should have been more explicit, or more precise.

Whose problem is it that we “live in a culture and generation where the Bible is no longer taken as an authoritative source in a quest for truth and meaning”? Besides, both Darwin and Marx clearly might have said the same thing; yet both were born 200 years ago. If the debate has indeed “moved back a level,” it certainly did not start with this generation, or with this culture.

The evidence for the authority of the Bible might legally be categorized as circumstantial. Why is that a challenge; and why do you consider it a new challenge? In fact--according to the Bible--the legitimacy and veracity (authority?) of what God has said has been challenged since Eden.
Furthermore, in your challenge it is unclear whether you are challenging us to be prepared to defend the faith—or, to rethink, i.e. reconsider, why we have faith.

Finally, you contend that, contrary to Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:20, 2 Corinthians 4:18, what we “see” in nature is, or should, be considered the authoritative “source of meaning and ‘truth’…especially…in the areas of origins, creation, and sin.”

I beg to differ. Put me down as an oblivious hunker downer.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Why is it assumed that God speaks only through the Bible? Does God limit information to the select few who both wrote and read the Bible? Can his words only be found in the Bible? What's this biblioaltry all about?

Did God cease interacting with humans once the canon was closed? Did he only inspire them to write thousands of years after the account of Creation recorded in the Bible by those same humans?

Limiting God to any one book, time, or place, is man's attempt to corral use for his own use. How can it be otherwise?

Steven 1 week ago

I enjoy for the most part reading through all the postings, however, there is also a great sadness as I see such hateful darts thrown at each other.

The one book - not written by an Adventist, no mention of EGW - placed in my mind the reality of creation over evolution, belief in God, other then being an atheist, is the book by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, titled: "I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist."

It has in simple examples presented the truth about a young earth, creation, and a God as Creator. It is a worth the money and the read. If after reading one does not see truth it maybe the same after reading the Bible one does not see God.

My postings are limited, nevertheless, I read the posting of others and ponder reality.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

To make it: either one is a YEC or an atheist is a false dichotomy. Millions of Christians believe that God created this earth. As to when is totally unimportant, just as accepting belief in God does not demand an exact description of his activities. Let God be God and stop trying to limit him to what one believes.

Horace Butler 1 week ago
We are trying to let God be God by accepting His Word as it is written, but the skeptics here at AT have sought out many inventions. His Word is plain enough, but because it goes contrary to the prevailing "wisdom" of a majority of scientists (most of whom find it comical that professed Christians try to blend the two belief systems, which are mutually exclusive). Whether anyone here likes it or not, there are only two options: either God created the earth instantaneously (as stated in Scripture--Psalm 33), and spoke all things into existence, without using the cumbersome method of evolution; or, somehow the earth created itself and life arose spontaneously. Now which of these makes more sense, and is more in harmony with what we see around us? Given the abundant evidence of design throughout the universe, I'll go with the former option.

**cb25**

Here's an interesting link re macroevolution. http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/comdesc/section1.html

Horace, how can you be so sure there are only two options? ie God snapped His fingers vs earth and life creating self etc.

Are you God that you can tell Him the only way He could do it? Your attitude is no different to an atheistic evolutionist who will "not allow God in the door". You are a "Creationist" who "won't allow evolution in the door." Is this because you fear the outcome?

What if - repeat - just **what if** God did in fact use an evolutionary process?

A posteriori examination of the data suggest to many, many observers that such a process has the most credibility. You say some scientists find it "comical" when Christians try to blend the two. If I can be a little direct: There are even more who laugh at the psuedo science and nonsense that comes from much of the YEC camp because they cannot blend the two.

The two are perhaps only mutually exclusive (to quote you) when parties at either extreme doggedly dig in and believe they are right - repeat **right**. Did you hear about the guy who had only been wrong once" That's when he thought he was.... may it not be either of us..

Cheers

**Elaine Nelson**

It's amusing to see the creationists making fun of evolutionists, as the creationists are the only smart ones "in the know" and evolutionists are simply atheists.

This is like the little kid who brags he can beat the biggest kid on the block, but when engaged mano y mano the braggart is soon shown up for what he is. Remember, William Jennings Bryant, one of the most eloquent creationists was disgraced by Clarence Darrow who knew far more about the Bible than Bryant thought he knew.

**cb25**
I was just re-reading the article by John McLarty *How Do We Know?*

This quote struck me again:

"Adventist scholars and most administrators re-adjust their understanding of the plain meaning of the words “created the heavens and the earth” to accommodate science. They set aside the plain meaning of Scripture regarding the age of the solar system and accept instead the testimony of experience (i.e., science)."

Then there is the article by Ron Corson, *The Pesher of Paul*

A careful reading of these two writers call into serious question many of the "either or", "black vs white" "dogmatic" statements that have been made on this thread, and many others.

Adventism is heading toward some interesting times. John McLarty goes on to suggest with regard to geochronology issues:

"The apparently impregnable wall of church authority will eventually crumble when it contradicts human experience. Church dogma cannot forever silence the voices of science, history, or the accumulated folk wisdom of the people of God.

Continuing to insist that our doctrines and public theology are shaped by the Bible and Bible only implies that all of our present doctrine and public theology is as infallible as the Bible itself. Thus any change would be a denial of the authority of the Bible. This fixity of doctrine, however, is contradicted by the preamble of our statement of beliefs and the history of our theological development."

Wow! Implying infallibility. That and the issue of authority.

Does that suggest that with our dogmatism, much of which has been seen in this thread, we are actually setting the bible up for failure? Do WE place it in an indefensible position by our own insistence that our doctrines are formed from the Bible only, when such is not the case?

If these things are even remotely so, what kind of negative impact on the appeal of Christianity are we having? Are we, by our false claims actually trashing the very book we try to defend?

Worth thinking about..

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Elaine Nelson 6 days ago

""Adventist scholars and most administrators re-adjust their understanding of the plain meaning of the words “created the heavens and the earth” to accommodate science. They set aside the plain meaning of Scripture regarding the age of the solar system and accept instead the testimony of experience (i.e., science)."

Where in scripture is the age of the solar system "clear and plain"? From what Bible are they reading? There are no dates given for either, so how can they be rightly called both "clear and plain"? Was the intent of the Bible writers to give explicit dates for anything, or were they writing of their world, its people and events? What was their reason in writing this? Was it to set up a
mathematical certainty about times?

Elaine,

I probably should have given a bit more context to the quote. McLarty was talking in the context of three Faith and Science Conferences sponsored by the General Conference. The "plain" reading of scripture is more an allusion to how YEC's or the like read the first chapter of Genesis. ie the "beginning" was day one etc.

I think he would agree: there are really no plain readings....all are "shaped and colored by the voices of science, history, or the accumulated folk wisdom of the people of God." to use his words.

Cheers

Philip Law

People are shifting the way they think every day. Christians become atheists or agnostics and vice versa. Shifting one’s way of thinking in regard to the final authority of the Bible is happening all the time. Often the shifting is not necessarily an enlightenment by changing a-priori assumption to a-posteriori studied position but rather a shifting of one’s a-priori assumptions based on one’s intellectual inclination or preference. It is disguised subjectivity.

Ella M.

"In defending an a priori held position we select evidence that fits our view, while often blindly ignoring data that would cast doubt on our assumption."

I admit to fitting into the above group. My position is that God is love, caring, and would go to great lengths (and has) to save us. This is the assumption that I base my faith on; in the weight of evidence I believe that it comes out ahead, therefore, I would not say that I "blindly" ignore the other data. Some of that data is even found in the Bible itself. But because God's perfect love is my assumption, I will interpret the Bible and nature in that light. Because if that assumption is false then there is little reason for me to be a believer in God at all. It is possible there are more atheists and unbelievers because believers have failed to reflect that reality about God. This is my overview.

In accepting doctrine I must first ask what picture does it give of God? The same goes for nature. I cannot accept macroevolution because of its cruelty before sin. God created a perfect world. I am not sure how, and I don't believe the Bible gives all the details. How could its writers understand today's knowledge of nature and present it in a logical manner for future generations? They could only do it through a story about a real God and real people and creation as they understood it.

I have sometimes wondered if the story is the Truth, why be so concerned about proving it. Maybe some people can't accept it as literal and must learn about God through story factual or not. What is more important--that we "prove" all these things to the postmodern mind or let them be
lost over our concern for facts like science does? Are we asking the wrong questions? Let's start with a God who loves totally.

Hi Ella,

I do like your thought that the story may be the Truth.

My use of the word "blindly" is more in the sense of "not being able to see" than having seen it, choosing to ignore it. Both senses were intended, but the first being the main one.

Perhaps the saying "The hardest thing to find is something you are not looking for", illustrates my point.

For the sense in which you have seen, but chosen to ignore other data, that is a personal, subjective judgment which each of us will make differently. While I think there are philosophical problems with a God of Love, and I certainly would not want to try to prove a God of love from either the Old Testament, or (to a lesser degree!?) nature, it is a much more appealing (better?) place to begin the story.

Ella, I too, have adopted the position that God is love and anything that refutes that I cannot accept; which is why I believe that the writers of the Bible, although may have been inspired, they were not given precience to know all the future. They were products of their time which is demonstrated throughout their writings. Just as their contemporaries wrote, believing that god(s) were in charge of everything that occurred.

"Sin" is a term never used in the story of Eden. There is a curse given by God, not Satan, of thorns and thistles and the need for work to provide food. There is nothing whatsoever about animals' predatory behavior either before or after Eve was seduced by the serpent. This has been added much later, and cannot be found in the original story.

The flood story which was attributed to God makes God a terrible tyrant who would kill all of his creation in order to wipe out their evil. This surely does not make God appear as a God of love who has love for all his children. Again, the story originated far back in antiquity and before the Bible story was written and is another one of the common myths from the mists of time.

The NT is the guide for Christians: IOW, the OT is a descriptive account of the history of the Hebrews while the NT is the prescriptive guide for Christians. Confusing their place in Christianity has led to all sorts of mischief. Would a Christian follow much of the OT rules? Surely, no one does. But the NT gives what Christians need is very simple: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and "Love one another." Too simple, which gives those who wish to continually add more, plenty of room and time to do so.
I appreciate your honesty in admitting that your goal is for Adventists to reconsider the Bible. However, you’re being intellectually in suggesting that this is in the spirit of the Adventist pioneers. The enlightenment challenge to the Bible was well underway when the Seventh-day Adventist church came into existence, our founders were well aware of it (though for the most part certainly not versed in it), and they soundly rejected it. It is revisionist history to portray the church’s founders as naïve enlightenment thinkers – people who would challenge the Bible if only they had thought of it, people who would accept empirical evidence as the ultimate source of truth if only culture would suggest it. The church was founded at its very core on Sola Scriptura and they consciously rejected the skepticism you suggest. To suggest that because they were forward thinking and promoted change they would reject the Bible is like suggesting that Marxists because they are progressive should be open to accepting the 20th cent. Ayn Rand, who came after them.

As to whether the Bible should be questioned, on an individual level I do not see that as too much of a choice. Doubts will come to some of us and we have to work through that. The Church should be supportive as people work through their doubts. However, doubts (as to the validity of the Bible) are not for the church as an organization. The church, at the level of its core identity, believes in the authority of the Bible. Those who reject this view would be best suited to find another community. If you believe that things make Seventh-day Adventists who we are, should be rejected, why are you one of us? It baffles me that you argue that Biblical authority is indefensible and yet choose to remain in a church that was founded on Biblical authority and write on the front page of a Blog that goes by the name of said church. There’s a whole wide world out there that agrees we with you and yet you stay with this small denomination to tell them that their fundamental worldview is wrong.

Tell me, was the approach to study by our pioneers in forming doctrines primarily a priori or a posteriori?

I think the latter, and it is that spirit of willingness to examine the evidence that I am suggesting we could/should recapture.

You say doubts as to the validity of the Bible are not for the church as an organization. Really?

Post Priori, of course, but this was because they gave absolute authority to the Bible over all doctrines - they believed in Sola Scriptura and critically analyzing human tradition about the Bible. It was not because they were empiricists who believed human analysis of evidence trumps all things. Suggesting that its in the spirit of Adventist pioneers to reexamine the authority of the Bible based on human evidence because they revised doctrines based on Biblical evidence is like suggesting Richard Dawkins is in the spirit of Thomas Aquinas because they both believe in thinking and philosophy. Also contrary to the thrust of this article the skeptics challenge to the Bible was already alive and well during the time of the pioneers and they clearly rejected it – so it’s not like we have to speculate on what they would have
“You say doubts as to the validity of the Bible are not for the church as an organization. Really?”
Yes really. There is simply no point to there being a Seventh-day Adventist church is there is no Biblical authority. Every individual has to decide for themselves whether they believe the Bible, and in a loving non-coercive way the church should help with that struggle. However, the church is an organization of Bible believing Christians. If you decide to not be one, I can totally respect that, but don’t twist yourself into intellectually dishonest pretzels trying to convince yourself that you’re the true spirit of Adventism. It’s like if your parents were communists and you adopt libertarianism, you shouldn’t stay in the Communist Party and try to convince that Marx and Lenin were really libertarians at hearts, but rejected it because of their culture.

cb25
6 days ago

John M,

I am very aware challenges to the Bible were alive and well, but it was not the dominant world view of the environment our church grew out of.

Let's take your argument about the spirit of our pioneers on face value. Tell me, has not the challenge to biblical authority become the dominant worldview? Are not the geochronology, evolution, science etc issues central to the dominant world view today?

If the answer to these is "Yes", here's my question to you:

**What spirit and method do YOU propose we respond to these challenges with?**

As for the "dishonest pretzels". Amusing terminology. I though communism was more an ideology? I thought Adventism was a movement based on an understanding of truth. Present truth if my memory serves me right! So when did our "truth" become locked in concrete?

mmm...I guess I should have thought of all the people who have dared to question its understanding of truth... Sure, they didn't burn at the stake, but the outcomes were often no different.

I like what McLarty said: "Church dogma cannot forever silence the voices of science, history, or the accumulated folk wisdom of the people of God."

But, maybe Irvin Taylor is right, change in this direction will be very generational. Perhaps the growing number of us who are concerned should sit it out for another decade?

Cheers

John Mark
5 days ago

I think you’ll find enlightenment thinking was very much the dominant thinking in academia during the pioneer days. Evolution of course did not gain dominance until later, but the reason it was able to do so was because the dominance of enlightenment
skepticism had already made room for it. Now, of course, you’re right that skepticism wasn’t the prevailing idea of the common people; and it has probably become more so, though in America the public is still about evenly split on evolution so I wouldn’t say it’s the dominant view. I think, perhaps, Adventists have a warped sense of these being new, when they had always been in the Universities; it’s just that in the 20th century the church went to the universities. Of course all of this is irrelevant to what truth is and what the church should be doing. So for the sake of argument I’ll say yes to your question.

The method I propose is to point people to Jesus as The Truth and to His word as the highest revelation of that truth. They must have their own encounter with The Truth to be convinced of Him, but we can point Him out and encourage them to open themselves up this encounter. If they come to this point, they will know that scientific knowledge with all its greatness and all it has done for us is still just humans peering into a glass darkly; and yet in the Bible we have a connection with one who does not peer through the glass darkly but who sees the universe in all its fullness as it really exists. The question is, shall we submit human things to a divine test for credibility or shall we submit divine things to a human test? The church at its very core identity has answered the former.

The church as you describe it – as a movement to discover truth with no firm commitment to an underlying truth that guided them (except for an empiricism that says the scientific method will always to the most reliable truth) simply did not exist. What you wish for can be found in a philosophical society, and the many universities of the world, but it has never been the mission of the church. Here’s a question for you. Why do you think there should be a Seventh-day Adventist church? You have explained what you think our purpose to do is, but what is our purpose to be. As I see it, the purpose you have the Adventist church pursuing leaves us with no purpose to exist.

John M

Your method appears to be 100% subjective. Joe’s point below highlights the weakness of this as I read it.

What do I think should be the purpose of SDA? As said earlier....I'm not here with all the answers...Whatever our purpose grows to become it must be relevant to thinking people and reason.

John Mark

That may be. It's a subjective connection to the greatest objective and subjective Truth. Considering the object of our knowledge in theology is a living God who seeks us out to reveal Himself, rather than a passive object we conduct experiments on, you're right that the knowledge comes via the Subject. However, it's not the human subject that determines the knowledge so it's not subjective in the way we generally think of it. Of course all this knowledge is received and filtered by the human subject, but this is true of hardest of hard sciences as well. This is the epistemological trap – no matter how solid the data the only way we get it is through our own personal senses. No matter how much objective truth is out there, all we get is a subjective experience of objective truth. If that subjective experience connects you
to a Divine subject then you can have a claim to absolute truth. If all it does is
connect you to the other observations of other human subjects than the relativists are
right.

As I mentioned in another thread the ironic thing about this desire for objectivity in
the Adventist church is that it would not make us relevant to the post-modern world.
To place a search for objective truth above all else might be a great way to make the
church relevant to Grandma and Grandpa, but the millennial have moved past this
approach. If the church’s mission really is to reflect the latest philosophical trends
then let’s at least know what they are. If we are to trade our spiritual birthright for a
bowl of lentils let it at least be a fresh one.

John Mark,

... And you talk about pretzels?

I think if you keep going just a little longer you will have the art of convincing
yourself that black is white and white is black.

my key board is play ing up atm so try to get back later . . .

Kevin Riley

Our pioneers were convinced that the Bible was true, and therefore its truth
could be found also in the 'real world'. Protestants have always had this belief
that theory should reflect reality. I think they may have inherited it from some
elements of the early church.

If you look at our church - at all levels - it is based on a commitment to absolute
truth. Not that we need to have a perfect understanding of that truth, but we do
believe it exists and we are on the road to understanding it better. Our pioneers
looked at the world to find evidence for what they already knew to be true. Yes,
they changed their minds on some doctrines, sometimes in response to history or
science showing they had misunderstood Scripture, but I believe it is 'revisionist'
to suggest that, in the big picture, they would have been willing to interpret
Scripture by science. It was really only in the details that science had an
impact. I am not convinced that many SDAs then or now can be convinced that
creation is merely a 'detail'.

Ellen White's use of history is illustrative. She would change details of her
narrative to fit better history, but the outline - the grand narrative - came from
the Bible and her visions. I believe our greatest need is to be clear on what is
actual Bible narrative, and what is our interpretation of that narrative. I still am
left with the strong feeling that moving from a literal interpretation of "God
created in 6 days" to "God created (perhaps) in millions of years by a slow
process of evolution" involves more than just a change in interpretation. It
seems to me that it does violence to the actual text, not just the interpretation.
But we have accepted that the universe is likely to be much older than 6,000 years, so perhaps future discoveries will move us to accept the same about the earth. If God did indeed create by evolution, then no doubt he will reveal that clearly at some time. But, personally, I would be very disappointed if that is the case.

John Mark 6 days ago

Barrett,
I also think your condescending attitude toward those who accept Biblical authority is misguided. You seem to have the common misconception that we are a bunch of ignoramuses and that we have never considered the challenges that have been brought against Biblical authority over the last three hundred years (you also seem to envision enlightenment skepticism as arising after Ellen White died, but that's another discussion.) Some are quite aware of them, but reject them. I for one, reject the absolute authority of empiricism. Just because the evidence of physical senses currently point one way (even overwhelmingly perhaps) does not mean its right. If we have a connection to an Omniscient God, which I believe we do, then He trumps the evidence. This does not mean I am unaware of the evidence or not smart enough to comprehend, it just means I have a deeper presupposition than naturalistic evidence. You're of course free to think that the Bible is not such a connection to an Omniscient God, but it begs the question as to why you're an Adventist and especially why you're trying to get the church to take your viewpoint.

Elaine,

"It's amusing to see the creationists making fun of evolutionists, as the creationists are the only smart ones "in the know" and evolutionists are simply atheists.

This is like the little kid who brags he can beat the biggest kid on the block, but when engaged mano y mano the braggart is soon shown up for what he is. Remember, William Jennings Bryant, one of the most eloquent creationists was disgraced by Clarence Darrow who knew far more about the Bible than Bryant thought he knew."

I think it is uncalled for when either side questions the intelligence of the other side. The universe is such that there are many conflicting viewpoints held by many intelligent and well learned people. The personal attacks ironically, are often a result of one feeling insecure about their own position. Deep down they have that nagging doubt that they might be wrong and so they lash out at the other side as being ridiculous and laughable. And FWIW it was William Jennings Bryan not Bryant.

Ella M. 6 days ago

Elaine said: "The flood story which was attributed to God makes God a terrible tyrant who would kill all of his creation in order to wipe out their evil. This surely does not make God appear as a God of love who has love for all his children. Again, the story originated far back in antiquity and before the Bible story was written and is another one of the common myths from the mists of time."

This is an example of how one might interpret the narrative in terms of God is love. On the surface it appears as you have written. However, what if God had not chosen to save Noah and his family and let evil continue? Suppose we take into consideration the existence of Satan who is
spoken of as "the prince of this world," and that he would take over the world after the death of Noah and family. Then all connection with God would have been destroyed on the planet earth. That being the case, Satan would have won and we would all be lost (or never born). No doubt humans would have ultimately destroyed themselves.

But God chose to save the few who listened and continue the race through them. We do not know that all the antediluvians were eternally lost, especially the children. To us the first death seems cruel, however, it is temporary to those who have not rejected God (as children have not).

But I think you can see the point--it was destroy the wickedness and save the race; or let them continue and lose the world and all communication with them. For me this sounds like a factual interpretation.

Whether this could have been a huge Middle-Eastern flood ("the world" usually meant the world that was known), or a global event, I can't say for sure. I think these were real people and the Story tells a truth about God's care for His people even though He was obviously disappointed in them. He could have chosen to give them up, but He didn't.

Remember all of the ancient cultures had a flood story that obviously had some basis in fact, and that was the original Story. The Bible records facts or stories, and we are free to interpret their meaning, for or against a God who loves.

Joe Erwin

As a former adventist, I find that I have a continuing interest in friends who have remained in the church, friends who have not, and how the world, the church, my friends, and I have changed (or not) across the years. Maybe, as I may have said before, "a continuing interest," should read, "a morbid fascination." I do see a lot of what seems to me to be bizarre and tortured rationalization of beliefs that are sometimes based in what seem to me to be excessively literal interpretation of scripture, or do not even seem to have any scriptural basis, but seem to be merely some tradition of dubious merit. It is especially annoying to see distortions of what scientists do and what science is, and to see the common claims that science and evolution equate to atheism. Science does not, and cannot, confirm or falsify the existence of God. Science can and does examine nature objectively, and it can, and clearly does, falsify some hypotheses about nature. One can deny the evidence and make up bizarre rationalizations to provide alternative explanations, but these really are not convincing to people of any age who have learned to examine evidence critically and objectively. If the church hopes to be relevant and attract and maintain people committed to faith in a loving God, it really must not retreat into (or maintain) bizarre cult-like commitments to styles of thinking that split its members away from considering objective reality. Intelligent people can believe irrational things. I'm not calling anyone stupid. But beyond some reasonable level, maintaining irrational beliefs requires an extreme and passionate commitment to ignorance.

Ella M.

I don't see any specifics here and just stereotypes. What are you referring to? Aren't we all ignorant in some respect? Even science has its limits; I enjoy science and reading about the mysteries that are still out there. As I have said before some of the Bible can be interpreted as metaphorical; what it means and how it is applied is more important. Neither can the Bible "prove" the existence of God.
We all have different ways of thinking, and I would not judge others to be ignorant or use extreme words to describe their identity and beliefs. My assumption is that God is love; there is an adversary that is not. That is objective reality—good vs evil. If God is not love as he describes himself in the Bible then he does not exist and we have no hope.

Ella M.

Joe Erwin,

I just found this quote [by you] on another blog: "... [another topic] are all very complicated and very private and personal, regardless of outward appearances. Every person is worthy of our respect and due consideration. Do I need to tell you this? Who am I that I should do so?"

I find this profound quote very appropriate for this discussion as well—just make religious experience and belief the topic, and you have what I am trying to say from a reliable source. God bless.

Joe Erwin

Dear Ella,

Thank you for your thoughtful comments. I agree with you that we are all ignorant of some things. I certainly am ignorant of much. In one sense, every conscious moment we focus on some sensory information to the exclusion of all else. In another sense, the more diverse our experience is, the greater the potential scope of information is that we must ignore in order to pay attention to whatever we focus on. But, having written that, I feel like I have over intellectualized this issue. What I meant above was that our faith should not require us to go off on irrational tangents that lead us to wild explanations that discount objective evidence.

But, then, I do not see the world in terms of "good vs. evil." It seems like there is so much that does not fit neatly into those two classes—that there easily can be some good and some bad in many events, some neutral, and seldom all good or all bad. I do not really see a reason to believe in a powerful but unseen presence promoting evil. If God is not love as I see him predominantly (though not exclusively) described in scripture, perhaps he does not exist—or, at least, is not who we thought He was. But if He does not exist, the concepts of sin and salvation have no meaning, along with much else of what we think about good and evil. While that might be interpretable as "no hope," I think it can also be quite liberating. Imagine if there is no heaven and no hell.... Imagine if we could simply love and respect each other without guilt or remorse, giving due consideration and treating one another as we would wish to be treated. And that is a good basis for ethical behavior regardless of what else one believes. The stronger our basis in objective evidence, the better we can understand each other and the more appropriately considerate we can be. Peace be with you, Ella.

Elaine Nelson

We each choose the kind of god we can worship. For some of us it is impossible to admire or worship the god often portrayed in the Bible. Personally, I have chosen to accept a God of Love
and whatever is not of love is not God.

Kevin Riley 4 days ago

Elaine

I am not sure any of us is really in the position to decide what is of love and what is not. Perhaps we all (even you) do not have a long or wide enough perspective to make that judgement. I prefer to believe that even those things I cannot understand are indeed acts of love, and wait until I have a better perspective before presuming to judge God, or to reject Scriptures when there is nothing better to base our lives on.

Elaine Nelson 4 days ago

Kevin, that is a position that many can adopt. But we cannot withhold all judgments until some future date, can we? Are we not called to choose based on our present understanding? Is there another way?

We would not do the same in present day situations, so how is it possible to postpone far more serious questions? Surely, no one would have questions about a future spouse if there were reports of such terrible behavior would he? Does God not want us to question but trust blindly?

It may work for you, but the only method I choose is to accept that what was written about God was only man's opinions and they had no more clue that we today but were no different than their contemporaries in believing that everything, both good and bad were directly caused by their god(s).

JaNe 5 days ago

What will become of the Church if we follow the wolves who have entered in trashing Genesis so as to make the Church no different than the world? And there are plenty of resources dedicated to using science to refute evolution and defend creation.

So when Christ said they were created male & female since the beginning, was Christ lying?

Joe Erwin 5 days ago

Hmmmm. Is the ultimate goal preservation of "the Church?" Perhaps it is for some.... If one does not think Genesis is a litteral account of origins, does not constitute "trashing" it. It can mean viewing it more accurately, or even just differently. But, JaNe, you may be correct that there is no room in the Church (with a capital C--at least the SDA church) for variation of thought and belief on this topic. And my perception that there is no room for me to believe what I believe is one reason that I am no longer an adventist.

Sorry, you lost me on the "was Christ lying?" question. I'm not sure what you are referring to....

It is not my intention to be a figurative "wolf." But "using science" to defend creation and refute
evolution is profoundly misplaced effort. If you believe in God, fine. Believe in Him, and do not try to tell Him (or me) how and when He had to have made everything. Don't put God in a box. And please do not condemn everyone who does not believe exactly as you do to eternal hell, or anchor your faith in concepts you do not need to have (i.e., if it turns out that everything is not the way we were taught as we grew up in adventist homes, that does not mean that NOTHING we were taught was valid).

I do agree that being open to changing the way we think, as we travel around in the world and go through life, is good advice. Wishing you well. "Joe the Wolf"

Howard Flynn 3 days ago
Thank you for that fine, thought-provoking blog. You certainly have put your finger on the pulse of much of the contemporary Adventist debate. Congratulations.

Are the issues this clearcut and straightforward? Of course it depends on whom you ask. One thing is certain: the distinctions made here are not universally held conclusions in the intellectual world of today. In fact, some would say that the basic point of this blog is itself a priori.

Blog readers might want to peruse the Wikipedia article on "Idealism" to get a taste of some of the thinking today. To quote a line from that article: "The 20th century British scientist Sir James Jeans wrote that "the Universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine."

So be a little careful here. Between the security of Positivism and the roller coaster ride of modern Idealism lies a real metaphysical mine field that suggests, nay demands, caution in exploring its intellectual landscape.

Aside from this one caveat I thank you for what you have written. It will be interesting to follow the fallout (pardon the pun) of what you have written.

hf
Atlantic Union College Insists It Still Has Plans to Reopen

Submitted Oct 19, 2011
By AToday News Team

By Karen Nugent TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

LANCASTER — While a planned merger with a fellow Seventh-day Adventist college fell through, Atlantic Union College will not close, according to church and college officials.

Donald G. King, president of the South Lancaster-based Atlantic Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, said talks have recently concluded with the state Department of Higher Education for plans to reopen. The plan has not yet been approved by the state agency.

Mr. King said there are no plans to sell the campus. “Instead, we intend to continue to improve the campus even as we prepare to restructure and reopen at a later date,” he said in an email. Read more...

Gailon Arthur Joy

2 weeks ago

Again, I would suggest it is one thing to try and ressurect the college from the Atlantic Union institutional burial pile (three hospitals, three academies amongst them) but it is yet another to raise the start-up capital and the working capital to support an unsupported school by its two primary constitutencies, Alumni and Atlantic Union members.

I have heard the King claim many a goal, including the raising of moneys that simply did not occur for AUC. And in the few cases when it did occur, in many cases the funds were "mis-approriated". I will continue to predict that all the King's horses and all the King's cannot put humpty dumpty back together again and to do so will constitute a waste of time, money and effort.

The Atlantic union has lost its reason to exist and should look to merge.

G.Arthur Joy, AUReporter

Elaine Nelson

1 week ago

Where is the necessary support for the school to reopen? Wishful thinking is not sufficient.

Dean Waterman

1 week ago

As with most things that are dying, we don't properly know how to euthanize, and put it out of it's...
misery. Many a church and school has been found barely with a pulse, and we don't know when to say enough.

It is sad that AUC is no longer, but put a period on the sentence, and invest in the unreached who are waiting to see the Gospel lived out in their part of the world.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

When something dies, it should be buried.

Bill Cork 1 week ago

The faculty are gone. The students are gone. The alumni left long ago. The buildings have been crumbling for some time. The landscaping has been unattended to for years. Enough. Sell the property and use the proceeds for the evangelization of young adults at secular colleges and universities in New England and New York.

Steve Tanner 1 week ago

Speaking from this same thing happening here in the Kansas/Nebraska conference. I went to PVA all 4 years and sent all my boys there all 4 years. I have seen many put millions of dollars into this school. Now it has closed and is all bulldozed away and you can't hardly tell where it was by driving past. It is sad the support from people wanting to send students to SDA schools is not what it used to be. I feel this is a measuring system of something. Maybe I'm wrong. It could be the lack of funds to send our sons and daughters away. Looking back also it caused me to leave home at a very early age. It was a great sacrifice for my parents in many ways. Looking back the school should have closed before those spending millions trying to keep it open another year or maybe two. If the support is not there all should face the truth. It could be easier now than later.

Steve

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

I went away to boarding academy at 14, far too young, IMO. I would never send my child away at that age. When our older daughter had two more years of high school, we chose to move only where she could be at home until ready for college. It may be a sacrifice for parents, but why is it not asking a child to also sacrifice home and the benefits, also?
As a denomination, Seventh-day Adventists may have, mistakenly, made a bad trade. We have held on to the law while leaving grace on the table. We give lip-service to grace, but the truth is we don’t trust it. That leaves us holding onto the law and the Old Covenant. We need something else. We need the (original) New Deal.

Let’s go right to the point.

Within the body of Christ, we (Adventists) have adopted the role of protectors of God’s Holy Sabbath. In anticipation of the prophesied final conflict between the image of the beast -- those who enforce worship by tradition and those who worship the Creator God, we have grounded our position regarding the 7th day Sabbath in the presumption that Sabbath worship is ultimately ratified by God’s law, written in stone. We, apparently, believe that we need the law to protect the 7th day Sabbath.

There is good reason to believe that the 7th day Sabbath needs protection. Since the time of Constantine (at least), there has been, among Christians, confusion about what day the Sabbath is, along with the debate about whether the specific day matters at all. The vast majority of Christians (including those who know that the 7th day is the Sabbath) observe Sunday out of tradition. Although this is not to be a point of judgment from those who observe that Sabbath on those who do not, Adventists believe that, at the time immediately preceding the advent of Christ, it will matter -- very much.

This law-based focus has led to a heavy emphasis on Sabbath-keeping as a sign of biblical enlightenment, commandment keeping, and as a point of differentiation. To this day, in many Adventist churches, when prompted to repeat our “affirmation of faith,” the congregation responds, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy . . .”

Funny, I always thought our faith was grounded in John 3:16. Really, it isn’t funny at all. It is sad that we so easily discount the most important, act of love, ever. For too many, the law has become the locus of their faith (Galatians 3:12).

What is more important, the tactic of establishing the true Sabbath by use of the Old Covenant law has led us to hold on to both covenants: the Old and the New. From a theological and practical standpoint, that simply cannot work.

Christ’s life and death ushered in the New Covenant and ended the Old (Hebrews 10: 1, 8-10). The New Covenant is defined by both the law of love and salvation by grace through faith. The Old Covenant law remains, defining sin. That law -- “the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones” (2 Corinthians 3: 7) -- applies to those who chose the way of the world and reject Christ. We who are in Christ are, in the New Covenant, no longer under the law as we have, through His blood, taken on the righteousness of Christ, which was shed for the remission of our sins. As such, the law does not apply to us (Galatians 4: 24-25, 28, 30-31).

When we hold on to both the Old and the New Covenants, we dilute the gospel. Reliance on the law of the Old Covenant is dangerous and burdensome (Galatians 5:4). It, effectively, nullifies Christ’s work on the cross and leads us to a dependence on our own works. By holding on to the Old
Covenant, we repeat history -- the bad part of it. Like the Pharisees, we seek righteousness through the law and (inadvertently) uphold Moses, not Christ (John 9: 27-28).

For the sake of the Sabbath, we hold on to the law. However, there are plenty of “law-free” reasons to keep the Sabbath. The most obvious reason is that keeping the Sabbath is good for you (Mark 2:27, Hebrews 4:1). Second, as the Sabbath precedes the 10 Commandments (Genesis 2:2-3), its observance is not tied to the either the viability or obsolescence of the law. Another nontrivial point: Jesus kept the Sabbath -- although he was continually at odds with the Pharisees about just what that meant (John 9:16 Mark 2: 24-28, Mark 3: 5-6, John 7: 19-24). The New Testament specifies Christ’s intent for the continued observance of the 7th day Sabbath, even after His ascension (Hebrews 4:4-10). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the 7th day Sabbath is a constant reminder that the God, who created this earth in 6 days and rested on the seventh, is the only one worthy of worship (Revelation 14:7). The Sabbath persists, without the need of laws engraved in stone. So, Sabbath-keeping and the New Covenant are not a mixture of legalism and grace.

The New Covenant is the turning point in the spiritual history of mankind.

Christ’s purpose in His first advent was to live a spotless life -- fulfilling the law (as no man had done, perfectly) and, then, to present himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Matthew 5: 17-18, Luke 24: 44, 46-47). If we take Christ at His word, He came to fulfill the law, not to destroy it. The fulfillment of the law completed the Old Covenant and paved the way for the new, perfect, blood-bought, eternal New Covenant.

The point of the New Covenant is to replace the Old (2 Corinthians 3: 6-7, 11, 13). The New Covenant releases us from the death penalty of the written law, because it was impossible for sinful men, in their own power, to keep (Hebrews 12:20). The New Covenant writes God’s law in our hearts and empowers the Holy Spirit to fulfill the law of love in us (Galatians 2:19-20, Galatians 3:14). Under the New Covenant, even our commandment keeping is motivated by love (John 14:15). In short, our good works are to be motivated by love and our shortcomings are covered by grace.

Ironically, the complete embrace of the New Covenant is the most conservative theological position, as it depends on the Bible to define what the Bible means. Those who cite the writings of Ellen White as the basis of their interpretation of the Bible may, then, wish to consider her words, literally:

“But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.” TGC, page 595

"Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men satisfied with the light already received from God's word, rest there and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion...When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what." (5T pp. 706-707).

The tendency to mix both Old and New Covenants keeps us in the uncomfortable and unnecessary position of rationalizing positions that the Bible (in my opinion) clearly contradicts. For example, the
teaching that we, who accept Christ, are still subject to the law, is explicitly refuted in several Bible passages (Romans 2:19-25, Romans 3:19-24, Romans 6:14, Romans 10: 3-4, Galatians 5: 3-4, Galatians 6:14). Some avoid and discount these passages, hoping against hope that they will not be read in context. If these texts are read, they are, too often interpreted with a bias toward the law and against grace. Somehow, grace is positioned as a dangerous notion, to be taken in small doses only. The “spin” used to protect the law drains both power from the gospel of grace and credibility from Adventism itself. If we consider the possibility that these texts mean what they say, our world will be radically changed -- for the better.

The New Covenant is good news. It is irresistible (Hebrews 6: 4-5). It is the light burden and the easy yoke (Matthew 11:29-30). It depends on Him, not on us (Romans 5:17, Hebrews 9: 14-15). It is enacted through the Holy Spirit rather than by the works of the law. It is eternal, paid by the blood of the Lamb of God (Hebrews 9: 12, 14-19, Hebrews 10: 9-10, 14). It is simply better (Hebrews 8: 6-7).

The New Deal is liberating -- and salvific (Romans 8: 2-4). Who doesn’t want that deal?

Ella M. 2 weeks ago

The most important part of Sabbathkeeping--it is a symbol of Christ. As we rest on the Sabbath from our labors, we rest in Christ from our works. Sabbath is a symbol that we cannot save ourselves through our works. I heard this idea first from a minister of another church--that Christ had replaced the Sabbath as our rest. But I asked him why wouldn't it be a reminder; he admitted it could be symbolic. I have heard this from Adventists too, but not enough. Sabbath reminds us not just of the creation, but our re-creation in the image of Jesus.

As one evangelist said (Jack Sequeira), the one who worships on Sunday yet has Christ as their rest is keeping the Sabbath more sincerely than the one who keeps the seventh day, yet does not enjoy or understand the rest of Christ. Therefore, the real "seal" of the end-times is not just a day, but Christ Himself. We are sealed in Christ. I think until we understand this truth as Seventh-day Adventists we will have no message on the Sabbath for the rest of the world. Isn't the "third-angel's message" righteousness by faith in verity as one writer called it? It is faith in what Christ has done for us that allows us to rest from our works. Call it the new deal or new covenant, the commandments are written on the heart and have a meaning far beyond a set of rules.

Preston Foster 2 weeks ago

Ella,

I believe you are very much on point. I believe we are sealed (in Christ) by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), who leads us into all truth.

I have heard other evangelists (Adventist and other Christians) argue that the entire Bible is about Jesus -- if we would just see Him. I believe that the point of the Sabbath (in the very last days) is not about the day itself, but about the Man (Revelation 14:7) who sanctified the day. For some reason, we have, too often, lingered on the means to the end and not the end itself.
William Noel
2 weeks ago

Preston,

Well said! You are gifted with both clear understanding and a descriptive pen for telling it.

As I read this I thought of Paul's admonition for us to grow beyond the law and no longer be under the "schoolmaster" whose role was to teach us how to live. The difference between keeping the law and living in the Holy Spirit is a question of degrees of separation from God. With the law we have a description of the character of God, but there is a degree of separation between us and God. When we are living in the Holy Spirit our regard for God's character does not change. The difference is the degree of separation is gone. It is like a young person who is physically separated from their lover and communicating by e-mail and tweets. There is love between them, but they are apart. But when they are together there is no longer a need for the e-mails and the tweets show the intimacy of understanding that comes when the separation is gone.

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

Preston,

Thank you for a very clear explanation of the troubled Adventist message with law and grace. How one can claim to be under the new covenant and yet turn to the old one for doctrine is an impossible situation. Yet how many, after reminded of the NT texts showing that the law has now been replaced by Christ attempt to explain it away, always in an effort to rescue sabbath, which is the *sine qua non* of Adventism: where would it be without sabbath? When the commandments are spoken of it is always the Fourth, as if the others are minor.

"The tendency to mix both Old and New Covenants keeps us in the uncomfortable and unnecessary position of rationalizing positions that the Bible (in my opinion) clearly contradicts." It will always put Adventism in an uncomfortable position and illogical attempts at rationalizing it will never be sufficient. By continually emphasizing the sabbath, grace is relegated to the back pews.

Kevin Seidel
2 weeks ago

Perhaps, if we could view the Sabbath as a spiritual discipline like pray, meditation, or fasting, we could embrace the new covenant without fear. Then Sabbath wouldn't be about keeping the law, but about entering God's rest, about fellowship with God.

Matt Britten
2 weeks ago

Thanks Preston for reaffirming the "new deal". This is something that has been an ongoing struggle for us as a movement to come to grips with. As a student many a years ago in Seminary, we worked through systematic theology. A couple of texts that I have yet to hear/find an honest and suitable explanation for come to mind once again whilst reading your article:
"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col 2:16).

And the other:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Rom 14:5).

I'd be happy to hear anyone's thoughts/reflections on these texts in light of the new convenant deal that Christ initiated and bought with His blood.

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Preston Foster  
2 weeks ago

Thanks all.

William, I love your analogy regarding separation. For me, the difference between the Old and the New, is, as you point out, under the Old, because of sin, we are estranged from The Father. Under the New, because of Christ's blood sacrifice and the grace of God, we are reconciled to The Father—and at peace with Him.

Elaine, the challenge (and I believe the blessing) for Adventism is to embrace the New Covenant message of grace. As stated, I believe we have hold grace at a distance in order to protect the Sabbath with the authority of the law. Doing so dilutes the scope and power of the Cross and the liberty that is available through walking in the Spirit.

Kevin, a "New Covenant" approach to Sabbath-keeping might enable a "thou SHALT" approach to the blessings of the Sabbath. Imagine that!

Matt, buckle up. I, too, hope to hear an honest discussion about these and other issues. Hopefully, the discussion can stay focused on the ISSUE(S). We'll see.

Thanks again, to all of you, for your encouragement.

---

Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago

We should not expect those texts to be discussed openly at either the seminary or at church. They are far too controversial and the contrived explanation often is an attempt to either cause more confusion or obfuscation. Never, in all my 70 years in Adventism have those texts been used in a Bible class or sermon. It is embarrassing for a theologian to be confronted with those texts and mumble and stumble in some rationalization why they don't really mean what they say.

Is there a theologian among these bloggers who will take the challenge to explain, what appears to be clear meanings of these texts?

How many Adventists have too late realized these texts were even in the Bible and lost faith in Adventism because these were ignored when they should have been primary?
Pagophilus

Preston, you make a few errors in your article.

1. The Sabbath is established in the 10 commandments, not the Old Covenant.
2. The New Covenant does not do away with the law. What does the new covenant say? "I will write my LAWS in their minds". In other words, I will change their way of thinking so that they obey my law without even thinking about it. You don't have to prove you are not a legalist, or a NewCovenanter, by breaking the law (or ignoring it).

And you forget there is more than one law.

Methinks you have been reading/listening to too many evangelicals.

There is nothing wrong with Adventist theology on this matter. It is watertight.

William Noel

Pagophilus,

Such arguments as you are pursuing totally miss the objective of the New Covenant. It has nothing to do with questions of ceremonial law vs. ten commandment law, how many times the law was given to man, or whatever other legalistic points you want to put into it. Instead, it is all about us growing into the relationship God wants to have with us by putting the Holy Spirit in each of us to teach, guide and empower us. When we embrace and accept that relationship the arguments you raise become moot because obedience to God becomes as natural as breathing. We no longer have to look at a written law because God is in us and guiding us to keep us from going astray. What is more, that relationship is so precious to us that we are horrified by the possibility of endangering it through disobeying our dearest friend.

Elaine Nelson

Please provide the texts showing there is more than one law. Is there ever a distinction in the Bible indicating two laws?

If there is only the difference between the two covenants ("I will write my Laws in their minds") that is no difference at all, as the Jews carried many of these laws in their minds already, and nothing new was added, according to this claim.

The New Covenant made the Old one obsolete, and what is obsolete is dying. Christ replaced the Law. The new Christians were never expected to abide by the Old covenant laws; the Old Covenant was made ONLY with the Jews, no one else. It cannot apply to Christians.

This is NOT from evangelicals, but from a clear reading of Paul's letters--the only ones addressed to Christians.
Are you contending that there is no difference in the Covenant made with Jews and Christians? Are Christians and Jews all alike? If Christians accept Christ, which the Jews did not, why are Christians expected to return to Judaism's laws and practices, all described in minute detail in the Torah? Do any apply to Christians today? Some? Which ones? What criteria is applied to select those?

Preston Foster

2 weeks ago

pegaohilus,

Perhaps it is your assumptions about what I am saying that has you seeing error. The article says:

- "The Old Covenant law remains, defining sin."
- "The New Covenant writes God’s law in our hearts and empowers the Holy Spirit to fulfill the law of love in us (Galatians 2:19-20, Galatians 3:14)."

You are in error about the establishment of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was NOT established in the 10 Commandments. That is a bad tradition that CAUSES us to lean on the law to protect it. The Sabbath was established at creation (Genesis 2:1-2). In the 10 Commandments, we are reminded (and commanded) to remember the Sabbath (the 10th paragraph of the article outlines other reasons to keep the Sabbath).

The premise of the article is not that there is only one law. The premise is that we (Adventists) tend to hold onto the Old Covenant law in order to establish and protect the Sabbath. Doing so, inadvertently dilutes the New Covenant, as it requires a dependence on what was done away (2 Corinthians 3: 6-7, 11, 13).

No one has advocated or even hinted that it is okay to break the law (why does that assumption work its way into every discussion on grace -- perhaps to protect the law?), Romans 6: 1-2.

The point is that the New Deal commandment is the law of love, not the ministration of death written in stones. The Bible says that keeping the law of love fulfills the whole law (Luke 10:25-28, Galatians 5:14). The specific point of the article is that the Sabbath persists, even without the law of the Old Covenant. The greater point is that, in the New Deal, if we are in Christ, we are under grace not law. (Romans 2:19-25, Romans 3:19-24, Romans 6:14, Romans 10:3-4, Galatians 5: 3-4).

Grace should not to be discounted. It is free, but not cheap. It cost the blood of the Lamb of God and the love of The Father.

Me thinks I have been reading The Word.

pagophilus

2 weeks ago

Yes, the Sabbath was established at creation, but it was spelled out in the Ten Commandments.
Preston, you're inventing some airy-fairy and vague concepts here just like you did in your previous "nailed to the cross" article. Just like your reasoning that the law can somehow be nailed to the cross and yet still relevant, this time you maintain that the Holy Spirit fulfills the law of love in us. The law is not there to be fulfilled, it is there to be obeyed.

And where do you get this concept of the old covenant law? There is only the one law, God's law. It is composed of many parts. The old covenant was "we will keep all your laws" and they failed. The new covenant is "I will write the law in your hearts". Part of the law was fulfilled in Christ, pointing forward to all He would accomplish and His death, and therefore abolished in His death. It was to be kept until the time of the death of Christ, and Christ kept it until He died. The rest of the law stands just like it always had. The old and new covenants do nothing to the law. The law is and has always been and always will be the same.

Adventists don't establish the Sabbath on the old covenant. We establish it on God's law, because God said that it is His day and we should keep it holy. It is a mark of our acceptance of His authority, because otherwise there is nothing that differentiates the Sabbath from any other day. The only reason to keep the Sabbath is because God said so. There may be other benefits to it, but the reason we do it is because God said. That goes for many other things, some which we understand and some we don't, but we accept that God knows all and knows what is best even if we don't understand. This is faith.

Oh, by the way, when the rich young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to be saved, Jesus replied "Keep the commandments". He wasn't being sarcastic in His comment and of course, more was to follow. But we should remember His response as an antidote to too much New Theology.

Is it blasphemy to wonder who stood by taking notes when the literal 24 hour/day creation week occurred? Is it, therefore, unreasonable to wonder who eventually learned to write, and inscribed those verbal legends on clay? When the 4th Commandment was delivered, was it not to the Jews? Perhaps it should read: "Six days shalt the world labor, and do all its' work." I'm not anti-Shabbat...I've marveled at watching Jews observing the Hebrew Day of Rest in Jerusalem.

I once worked in a mission field at which a Loma Linda doctor was criticized when her laundry was seen on the line Sabbath morning. She had been performing a series of life saving procedures in the hospital at Friday sundown, and most of the night as well. She'd have been deemed just as guilty if she'd attempted to retrieve the clothes next morning. Reminded me of Yeshua daring to 'reap' a few kernels of grain on Shabbat. Is this sort of thing really necessary?

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pegalophilus,

This is where your responding to a stereotype and and presumptions will have to confront the reality of what is actually written. I have (again) supplied texts to support what I am saying.

Somehow, you seem to think that I am anti-Sabbath keeping. I am manifestly "pro-Sabbath" as, I agree, in the end times, it will be a symbol of our allegiance to the Creator God. I wrote this article, in part, to show that Sabbath-keeping both preceded the Old Covenant law and persists in under the New Covenant (thus the listing of "law-free" reasons to keep the Sabbath).

Why is this necessary? Because the New Covenant makes it clear that, in Christ, we are not under the law and that establishing the Sabbath to the law-only actually jeopardizes it (in theological terms).

The Bible says that by no works of the law shall a man be justified. So, I disagree with you. The purpose of the law is not obedience (Romans 2: 18-23), but to show us our need for a Savior and grace (Romans 3:20-22). By sinning (Romans 3:23), we have demonstrated that we cannot keep the law (Romans 3: 9-10), thus the need for Christ, His sacrifice, and God's grace. We can only approach living a sinless life through the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ living in us (Romans 7:19-25, Romans 8:1-2).

Regarding the "two (versions of) laws," I am simply referring to the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) of the Old Covenant and the Christ's Law of Love (Matthew 22: 37-40). If you don't believe the 10 commandments are part of the Old Covenant, you may want to re-read Exodus 34:28-29. Christ gave a "new commandment" (John 13:34-35) which is the
law of love. The 10 Commandments and the Law of Love are not in conflict, as they both reflect the will of The Father. However, it is the Old Covenant Law that Christ came to keep (because no man could keep it perfectly), ushering in the New Covenant. When Christ said, "If ye love me, keep MY commandments" He was referring to the law of love -- the new commandment He gave.

The law of the Old Covenant has been "done away" (not voided, as it applies to those who reject Christ) for believers and followers of Christ (2 Corinthians 3: 11 KJV). The Bible says that the "ministration of death written and engraved in stones . . . which glory was to be done away," and "For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious," 2 Corinthians 3:6-7, 11. Verse 14 says, "But their minds were blinded: for unto this day remaineth the same veil, untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart, Galatians 3: 24, 30-31 again, specifically mentions Mount Sinai "which genderth to bondage." Under the New Deal, we are instructed to cast out the bondwoman and her son . . . we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

Again, I am not advocating lawlessness. I am advocating Bible-based freedom in Christ -- which cannot be at odds with God's law (Galatians 5:1). If, under the New Covenant, the law is written on our hearts, why is their need for the "ministration of death, written and engraved in stones?" (2 Corinthians 3:6-7)

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Our church has partially grounded our beliefs in the Old Covenant.

**The Law of God - SDA Fundamental Belief No. 19 (excerpt)**

"The great principles of God’s law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God’s love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God’s covenant with His people and the standard in God’s judgment."

I do not disagree that God's law is binding on those who are not covered by Christ's blood. But the definition of salvation is Christ's blood covering our sins (the breaking of the God's law). Christ kept and fulfilled the Old Covenant law, making our salvation possible. It is by His works, not our own (i.e., obedience to the law), that we are saved. His grace saves us. We
can only be obedient to His Spirit (Galatians 5:18, 22-25).

I could disagree not with you more. You say, "The only reason to keep the Sabbath is because God said so. There may be other benefits to it, but the reason we do it is because God said. That goes for many other things, some which we understand and some we don't, but we accept that God knows all and knows what is best even if we don't understand. This is faith."

It is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Deal. The Old is (flawed) obedience because "God said so." The New Covenant is obedience to the God out of gratitude and love. Faith says that Jesus died for me and paid for my sins. I accept that gift and, in gratitude and love, live to please Him and love others.

This is faith.

This theology is as old as The Cross.

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pagophilus 2 weeks ago

Preston, you are engaging in double-speak. You want to have obedience without the law. Obedience to what I might ask? (His Spirit I see you have written above. That's very vague. I'm sure the Spirit will remind you of the law if you would be on the edge of committing adultery.) You want to have Sabbath without the law. You want also to still have the law but have it tied to the cross. In other words you want to have the law but not have the law.

Yes, the purpose of the law is to show us our need of a saviour, but it is to be kept. Otherwise it's not a law, it's a pretty poster of a motivational saying on the wall.

The Old Covenant wasn't flawed. God does not enter into flawed covenants. The covenant was broken because the people did not fulfill their part.

Not being under the law does not mean not being subject to the law. Otherwise I can go and do what I want. It has much more to do with not being subject to its penalties because Jesus paid the penalty that the law prescribed.

God's law is binding to all, including those covered by Christ's blood, except that those who are covered by Christ's blood are not subject to the law's penalties. Otherwise those covered by Christ's blood can go and do as they please. And then they would be lawless.

You cannot have it both ways. One of the reasons the Seventh-Day Adventist church was called into being was to draw attention to God's law which had been neglected for centuries.

What I'm not saying is that we are saved by keeping the law. We are not. But the law stands and we are subject to its requirements, whether we are covered by Christ's blood or not.
pagophilus,

I must say to you, as I have to Preston, it's the terminology, not the concepts that is somewhat problematic.

Whether you know it or not, your making Preston's point in real time about our penchant as SDA's to defend the law at all cost... especially grace. Where does it say in the NT that we are bound by God's law as Christians? How would you explain what Paul means about not "being under the law, but under grace?" Romans 6:14 Or, to be "dead to the law... set free from the law?" How about, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God in sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law, might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Romans 8:3.4 What is Paul saying? He is definately not saying that we are bound to the law?

If Christ paid the penalty for the broken law, the death sentence has been rendered, by accepting Christ's death as your death, the law has nothing else against you. Now here is where Preston's terminology gets sticky, at least to me. Yes we are no longer under grace, but under sin, but what does that mean? When you sin, if you are bound by the law, under it, you must pay the penalty that the law requires... death? Why are you still here to post on AToday. Because by the grace of Christ, he bears that which you should have suffered instead of you. It's true, the law (as the Holy Spirit's tool) still convicts the believer of sin under the New Deal (Covenant), and we must still confess / repent of the sin. But we have not lost our justification / redemption / salvation... That does not mean that a life of abject lawlessness will not lead one to perdition, it surely will. But grace is God's given means to establish the law of love / liberty in the heart / mind / experience of those who have chosen to follow Him. Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13.14.22-24; 1 Timothy 1:5

You want to talk about double speak: "What I'm not saying is that we are saved by keeping the law. We are not. But the law stands and we are subject to its requirements, whether we are covered by Christ's blood or not." What part does grace play in your scenario here? Cut it any way you want... salvation is based on obedience, because if you disobey, your lost... that's the only implication I can draw here. This is the double speak that has caused SDA's for decades more problems in house then you can begin to imagine.

It's only by walking in the Spirit, by the grace of God, that you cannot honor God and His law while escaping the corruptions that is in the world thru lust. Galatians 5:16 New Testament law keeping is a matter of motavation / the heart... not performance... to say otherwise is to find oneself in the same situation the Galatians were in; "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Galatians 5:4-7 ESV)

The issue is obeying the truth. Romans 6:17-22 Being a slave to God is tantamount to
law keeping... Genuine NT faith is accepted as obedience.

laffal 2 weeks ago

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It's only by walking in the Spirit, by the grace of God, that you cannot honor God and His law while escaping the corruptions that is in the world thru lust. Galatians 5:16 New Testament law keeping is a matter of motivation / the heart... not performance... to say otherwise is to find oneself in the same situation the Galatians were in; "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the
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| A very necessary correction: in the place of Yes we are no longer under grace, but under sin, but what does that mean? It should read **Yes we are no longer under law, but under grace...**

**That's a big oooppppssssss.**

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<th>Preston Foster</th>
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Well, now you are just flat-out unbiblical (I've noticed your opinions are not accompanied by texts to support them).

- You say, "**The Old Covenant wasn't flawed. God does not enter into flawed covenants. The covenant was broken because the people did not fulfill their part.**"
- The Bible says "**For if the first covenant have been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.** For finding fault in them he saith, 'Behold the days come,' saith the Lord, 'when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not,' saith the Lord. 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' saith the Lord; **I will put my laws in their mind and in their hearts;** and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people"... In that he saith, **A new covenant he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxed old is ready to vanish away.**" Hebrews 8: 7-10, 13 KJV.

- You say, "**You want to have Sabbath without the law.**"
- Adam had Sabbath without the law, as did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob Enoch, and Noah. Not bad company.

- You say, "Not being under the law does not mean not being subject to the law."
Otherwise I can go and do what I want."
- The Bible says, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," Galatians 5:18 KJV. If I am led by the Spirit, I will do what as the Spirit leads. That can never be in conflict with God's law, written on my heart.

- You say, "You want to have obedience without the law. Obedience to what I might ask? His Spirit I see you have written above. That's very vague. I'm sure the Spirit will remind you of the law if you would be on the edge of committing adultery."
- Christ says, "How be it when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," John 16:13 KJV. If Christ said the Holy Spirit will guide us into ALL truth, is that vague? It is only vague if you do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit and are not led by Him. The Bible says, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shout up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Galatians 3: 23-25 KJV.

- You say, "You want to have obedience without the law. Obedience to what I might ask?"
- The Bible says, "And behold as certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, 'What is written in the law? How readest thou?' And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all they heart and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thy self. And he (Jesus) said unto him, 'Thou hast answered right: do this and thou shalt live," Luke 10: 25-28. Our obedience, in the New Covenant, is to the law of love, to the Holy Spirit, and to the laws written on our hearts. None of this is in conflict with the 10 commandments, but it is under a better covenant (of grace).

- Finally, you say, "But the law stands and we are subject to its requirements, whether we are covered by Christ's blood or not."
- Again, the Bible says, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," Galatians 5:18.

I believe the Bible.

Preston wrote: - The Bible says "For if the first covenant have been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault in them he saith, 'Behold the days come,' saith the Lord, 'when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

Did you notice it said "finding fault with them" (the people), not the covenant nor the
law? That's what made the old covenant unacceptable. Not that God imposed a faulty covenant on them but not on us.

Preston wrote: The Bible says, "But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," Galatians 5:18 KJV. If I am led by the Spirit, I will do what as the Spirit leads. That can never be in conflict with God's law, written on my heart.

And what does it say in Romans 6:14,15? 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

And what is the definition of sin? 1 John 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And that is better stated in the King James: Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Sorry Preston, you can never remove keeping the law from living a life in Christ, nor from the Adventist faith.

Preston Says: Adam had Sabbath without the law, as did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob Enoch, and Noah. Not bad company.

So which law was it that Abraham kept in Genesis 26:5 "because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

The law existed from the beginning. And the law is a transcript of God's character. I'm sure you can find the quote to match that assertion. (I don't quote many Bible texts because I usually squeeze a response in between waking up and going to work, or just before bed, and with an 8-month old child and a garden to look after and other responsibilities I don't have time for lengthy preparation (and I don't have scripture well-memorized).)

For people who are led by the Spirit (ie Adam before the fall) and who do not have a tendency to sin, you do not need to spell it out to them. Like with little children who are "innocent", you do not need to tell your 1 year old child "do not murder" because the tendency to do it is not there. But when the tendency is there, the law needs to be spelled out.

If it really was as simple as accepting Christ and living by the Spirit, why have the thousand plus pages of scripture. Maybe it's because we need an explanation of what accepting Christ and living by the Spirit really means in practice.

The other thing you are forgetting is the distinction between the ceremonial law and the moral law (10 commandments). This distinction becomes clear in context. For example Colossians 2:14, the handwriting of ordinances being against us, having its parallel text in Deuteronomy 31:24-26 24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 “Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.
Here you have a handwriting (Moses' book) of laws (ordinances) being a witness against the people. In other parts of the NT this distinction also becomes clear through reading the context, but you probably don't see it that way. In fact, in Colossians 2:14 you probably read it as a certificate of debt rather than the plain reading.

It is this unwillingness to read what is plainly there and a willingness to see what you want to see that is causing you to fulfill the text in Mark 4:12 "so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN."

Keeping the law does not save us but breaking the law (and not repenting nor overcoming) will surely condemn us. No amount of law keeping will save us. Only Christ can save us through what He did. But He is not going to save unrepentant sinners. And sin is defined by the law (the mirror).

There's a paragraph on someone's website which make it quite clear: Think about it this way; Say you were found guilty of murdering someone, and the law of the land sentenced you to death. Can you "work" your way to freedom? No, because you are under the law and it demands your life. The only way you can be free, is if a judge has compassion on you and pardons you. Let's say that happens; A judge comes along and pardons you. You are now under grace and no longer under the law, which demanded your life. You are free!! Now, do you leave thinking, "I'm free!! I found grace with the judge, I'm free to go and commit more crimes, because I'm now under grace, not under the law!" Of course not. Any person with an ounce of gratitude would now go and KEEP the law the best they could. And anyway, does the law of the land now become void because you found grace from the judge? No, the law still stands. Do you see this truth with regards to being under grace, not under law?

Read the whole Bible in context, and remember Peter's statement in 2 Peter 3:16 that "His (Paul's) letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

"Preston wrote: - The Bible says "For if the first covenant have been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault in them he saith, 'Behold the days come,' saith the Lord, 'when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,'" Hebrews 8: 7-10, 13 KJV."
pegaophilus writes: "Did you notice it said 'finding fault with them' (the people), not the covenant nor the law? That's what made the old covenant unacceptable. Not that God imposed a faulty covenant on them but not on us."

- Either you are in denial, or you are not reading this objectively. It simply does not say what you says -- or want it to say. It is a simple sentence with a specific subject -- the (first) covenant: "For if the **first covenant have been faultless**, then should no place have been sought for the second." The reason given for the second covenant was that there was fault found with the first -- simple sentence. The fault with the first covenant was that it did not completely make provision for the pervasive faults of the people. The first covenant, paid for with the blood of animals, provided temporary forgiveness for past sins of men, and, significantly, **provided no grace** --- even for a faulty priest, who was interceding for the sinner(s). The New Covenant provided a perfect Lamb of God who paid for the sins of the world -- once and for all (Hebrews 10: 9-10).

- pegaphilus writes: "And what does it say in Romans 6:14,15? 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!"

- For some reason you want to believe that grace enables and even promotes sin. It does not. We have referenced these very texts in explaining this to you earlier. It seems that either you refuse to accept that we can live in peace with Christ without the law or that, in order to protect the law, grace must mean "I wanna sin!" The original article, and everything that has been written about the New Covenant and grace says that, if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law. Several times, we have referenced the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), which fulfills the law of love -- and against which there is no law (Galatians 5:24).

- pegaphilus writes: "So which law was it that Abraham kept in Genesis 26:5 'because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.'"

- Abraham was operating in faith (Romans 3: 6-10, Hebrews 11: 8, 17) -- being led by the Spirit, who led him to do the will of God -- without a written law. Walking in the Spirit is not "new theology," it is God's preference for communion with us. The law is intended to be a temporary substitute to bring us into communion with Christ (Galatians 3: 24-25).

By the way, since you are very conscious of the condemnation of sin by the law, you may want to consider these texts as well:

- "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Galatians 2:21.

- "For the promise that he should be heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness by faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect," Romans 4: 13, 14 KJV.
"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace," Galatians 4:21, Galatians 5:4.

- Ephesians 2:14-16
- Philippians 3:6-9
- Titus 3:5

Try to remember, being led by the Spirit, not by law, in no way equates or even approaches lawlessness. Assuming you are married, are you faithful to your wife only because adultery is wrong and illegal? No. You have no desire to hurt her and want to be with no one else. In other words you love her. Doing what she wants, even if not your natural inclination, comes easily and naturally. Knowing her, you anticipate her desires and, if you get it wrong, you apologize and quickly pivot to a place that makes her happy.

If we are led by the Spirit, we have similar motives. The law is not our motivation. Love leads us to live consistently with the law. But, even more than your wife gives you, God gives us grace to cover our shortcomings, which (as our wives will attest), despite our best efforts, are many.

I implore you to search the Scriptures in prayer. As we cannot be saved by the works of the law (Galatians 2:16) and we are saved by grace (Galatians 2:21), I ask you to consider the blessings and freedoms God has provided to us (Galatians 5:1).

Finally, I will be obedient to The Word: "Avoid . . . contentions and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain," Titus 3:9.

Peace, grace, and blessings.

CORRECTION: The first reference to Abraham's faith provided wrong text reference. The correct reference is Galatians 3: 6-11.
I'm not sure that I can wholly agree with the Old Covenant Law vs the New Deal (Covenant) Law as though they are inherently different. In my understanding the law is the same, it's just that the Old Covenant/ New Deal motivations are not only vastly different, but irreconcilable. And I believe you illustrate my point in your statement about SDA's seeking to defend the law, while giving maybe a little more then lip service to grace, yet always leary and paranoid when the subject of the grace of God that brings salvation to all men is brought forth, yes we have been guilty of that. For some reason we are afraid that grace will lead us to perdition, when Paul says that grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness. Go figure.

Why on earth we are afraid of not being under the law, but under grace is a head scatcher to say the least. To be under law is to be under guilt / condemnation / the curse, with no way out... apart from grace. And why it is hard for us to get a hold of the fact that grace does not free us to do as we please, but is the heavenly means of writing the law upon our hearts as a practical means of experiencing what it means to be godly / loving / lawful people is equally puzzling.

As Sis White put it... the law is the gospel of Christ veiled, and the gospel of Jesus is nothing more or less then the law defined, showing it's far reaching principle. (RH 5/27/1890)

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Brother Preston,

In this new deal you so enticingly package and offer in this blog, (which I must say is done in incredible style befitting a true marketing pro), I have a question which came to mind when reading this mega Grace blog which seems to be ‘part two’ of your ‘nailed to the cross' blog. For that I give you credit Sir: Grace in Jesus Christ is a real big deal. So here's my question regarding the deal you have posed: "Where does obedience fit in?". In Gen 4:10 we see the promise of Messiah (Shiloh) and the resulting obedience of His people. This was before Sinai. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments wherever Grace is magnified, obedience is a part of this experience of Grace.

Also – if we’re not talking ceremonial laws here are we referring to the Ten Commandments? As you are aware that ‘we’ Seventh-day Adventist’s unambiguously believe that these types, symbols and ceremonies of the ceremonial law were fulfilled in Christ at the Cross. Jesus did say: “I you love me, keep my commandments” which clearly refers to obedience (John 14:15). Then in terms of the ‘Indwelling Christ’ (Gal 2:20) (Rom 8:11) through the ‘Indwelling Holy Spirit’ one is transformed into newness of life because of God’s Grace in Christ (Messiah) (2Cor 3:18, Rom 12:2, 2Cor 11:15, Gal 6:15).

Jesus was obedient Heb 5:8, Rom 5:19 – so too are we in Him 1Pet 1:2 (note in this verse Grace is mentioned as part of obedience in Christ Jesus through His precious blood. Can obedience then be obfuscated by Grace or is it a relative part of this 'experience' God freely offers which you have nicely packaged on this blog as the 'new deal'?

PS. Pouncing on the Sabbath seems to be a giveaway...and limits the mega-Grace 'new deal' package somewhat, in my humble opinion, Sir.

♥T
Trevor Hammond

Oops - typo first text should be Gen 49:10.
♥T

Preston Foster

Brother Trevor,

Thanks for your kind words. I will respond in greater length later on. I just want to clear this up as soon as possible (although laffal's response is very close to what I believe).

You misunderstand my intent and perhaps my words. I am, in no way, "pouncing on the Sabbath," nor giving it away (as it I could!). Rather, I seek to ensure the protection of the Sabbath message by grounding it in both pre-law sanctification (Genesis 2:1-2) and New Testament intent (Hebrews 4: 3-10). In short, the Sabbath is as old as the world we know.

My point is, ironically, we (Adventists) inadvertently jeopardize the (theology of) the Sabbath by grounding it in the law of the Old Covenant (please see my earlier note to "pegolophilus").

Peace.

laffal

Treavor,

I may not be speaking for Preston here, but I do believe you've stated the other issue with many of us SDA's when it come to "mega Grace", as mentioned the one is to defend the law and the Sabbath, the other is the big O... obedience.

First of Jesus obedience was as necessary as His death on the cross to meet the demands that God's law had upon us. Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:10.13 Our salvation is not based on our obeying as Christ did. That would minimize what Christ accomplished in His birth / life / death / resurrection as the Savior of all men. John 3:16; 4:42; 1 Timothy 1:15; 4:10; Hebrews 10:11-14; 1 John 2:1.2 As well as we would be found in a long line of those who Paul described as the Judaizers who dogged his steps / efforts to preach the gospel of grace... Romans 5:20.21; Galatians 5:4 And SDA's would be rightly identified as legalists.

There can be no true obedience on our part without the grace of God. Without grace you would not know how to, much less be able to obey God and His law. Titus 2:11-14 "Where does obedience fit it?" Obedience is the response of love born out of a heart of appreciation for what it cost Christ / God to redeem us. John 14:15; 1 John 5:1-3 Genuine obedience is the fruit of a surrendered life to Christ that has the Holy Spirit fulfilling the righteousness of the law thru those who are saved by faith, thru grace. Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-8

Bro T., be careful not to pit law against grace, they are both given by God for the salvation of sinners. That's been an issue since the days of the Apostles, it's nothing new. If you go back and read all that Bro. Preston has been saying, (I personally have bantered with him about some of his terminology) you will not find that he is advocating a disobedient / lawless life for the redeemed.
believer. Quite the contrary, our brother has been stating that, as does Paul, the Bible teaches that the redeemed Christian (when the gospel is rightly understood) does not have to fear God and His law in terms of our obedience / faithfulness to Him / His law. Luke 1:68-75; Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 4:4-7 Why not? Because the righteousness of Christ as a free gift to all who would receive it is based on Christ's obedience as our representative. The believer is now free to serve God out of love / in the Spirit, and not out of fear / in the letter. Romans 7:4-6; 2 Corinthians 3:4-7 Nor can you show where our brother has clearly stated that grace does away with the Law of God. (read my last post on this blog)

Revelation 14:12 makes it clear that obedience is a sign of those who have the patience / endurance of the saints, but they also have the faith of Jesus... and Jesus Himself said, I can of myself do nothing, it is the Father who does the works in me... John 5:19,30; 14:9-11. And Jesus said... without me you can do nothing... John 15:5. Genuine, Biblical obedience is the fruit of the union between Christ and the believer who is receiving the much more abounding grace then the sin that abounds in the world... it's a co-operative endeavor between the Spirit and the follower of Christ... Grace is not only the unmerited favor of God giving us His Son to save us, it is also the power of God in the life of the believer to do what is pleasing to Him... Mega grace is a great term... Amen

Stephen Foster 2 weeks ago

Matt,

As I understand it, what the two texts (Colossians 2:16 and Romans 14:5) you referenced are saying is that we, as Christians, are never to judge others or to be judged by a day that we observe, or do not observe.

This, of course, has profound religious liberty implications for those of us who take a historically Seventh-day Adventist approach to eschatology. (If we never judge anyone in this regard, we would never advocate or countenance any civil law regarding a day’s observance.)

Preston,

As you know, Trevor’s questions and laffal’s observations with regard to grace are, as usual, nearly identical to mine (“What is ‘this Gospel of the Kingdom’ anyway?”).

Preston Foster 2 weeks ago

Stephen,

I don't understand why this would change our religious liberty position at all. If we hold that the Sabbath was sanctified by the Creator God, codified in the 10 Commandments, persists (per Hebrews 4) even after (arguably) the Old Covenant has passed, and is the conviction of our conscience, why would we hesitate to protest against the state enforcing observance of another day (i.e., Sunday)?

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago
Has any government ever forced, by law, an observance of any holy day?

David 2 weeks ago

Elaine if ever you go to Lima Peru, visit the “wax Inquisition Museum”. I remember seen a “wax man” been tortured “ Carbajal HEREJE for keeping the Sabbath” probably this poor man was a Jew that was punished by the inquisition

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago

David, I have been to the Torture Museum in Rothenberg, Germany where many of the torture machines were employed: iron maiden, screws, etc.. These were used by Christians on Christians. When hasn't it occurred? The powerful define "orthodox" and dissenters are "heretics."

BTW, millions have been sent to their death for believing in a religion, but to make a day the center of all persecution is to center everything on the worship of a day. Can a day even be worshiped? Or is the totality of one's personal belief that should be considered? If, as Paul says, we are not to be judged on days, isn't it about declaring that God is our Redeemer? If so, then all Christians who claim the same can not be separated by a day.

Stephen Foster 2 weeks ago

Elaine,

Your attempts to avoid the possibility that Christians will again persecute Christians because of the differences of the day observed are fascinatingly obvious because you acknowledge that Christians have a history of persecuting those who have veered from “orthodoxy;” and you have acknowledged the dangers of intolerance. Nevertheless, you go to pains to dismiss any possibility that the doctrinal difference of the day observed (as set apart) could never catalyze such intra-religious persecution in the future.

I digress, of course, because this is besides the point of this particular blog.

Stephen Foster 2 weeks ago

Preston,

This may be a “first;” in that you misunderstand me. These texts have religious liberty implications because whenever others are in a position to judge Sabbath-keepers, we can point to these biblical suggestions that Christians should never engage in such activity.

Preston Foster 2 weeks ago

Stephen,

You are right, of course. I only wish/hope that Christians will operate according to The
Word.

The record on that is spotty, at best.

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**laffal**

2 weeks ago

Preston,

Amen...

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**Trevor Hammond**

2 weeks ago

**RE this comment above: "Has any government ever forced, by law, an observance of any holy day?"**

The US of A perhaps. Trace back the 'blue laws' and you will see...

♥T

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**Elaine Nelson**

2 weeks ago

State governments have, in the past, prohibited certain businesses from operating on Sunday, but have any forced OBSERVANCE of any day as holy?

There is a great deal of difference. States may force liquor stores not to operate on Sunday, or certain other businesses, but if you can furnish evidence of any U.S. state or government forcing, "by law, an observance" of any day, please do so. Many in the U.S. have a two-day weekend, but it may be used anyway we choose: church, sports, or other use of free-time.

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**laffal**

2 weeks ago

Eliane,

On the Federal level, Congress, the setting aside of Sunday as a holy day was undertaken in / by the Blair bill in 1888, and once again in 1893 using the World's Fair as the nexus for the bill.

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**laffal**

2 weeks ago

The reason for the defeat of each bill was by enlarge due to the efforts of an Adventist pastor... A.T. Jones who argued the merits of religious liberty before Congress in each case.

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**Elaine Nelson**

2 weeks ago

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. With Adventists and Orthodox Jews and the increased hesitance to allow such laws to reach the people, how might it occur if, particularly the
Adventists who are so prepared for such a law, to have one quietly slip through?

Preston Foster
2 weeks ago

Elaine,

Who knows?

You like to read broadly. Might I suggest the book "The Black Swan," which examines the dynamics of the improbable. The premise of the book is that history moves on a slow continuum -- until it doesn't. Unforeseen events, that only seem obvious in retrospect (i.e., 9/11 and its aftermath or, if you will, The Flood), move the arc of history in dramatic, inalterable ways.

Things change fast. Ask anyone who's been "renditioned."

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

Preston, I have not read the book you refer to but am aware of its thesis.

Currently, I am listening to the Teaching Company Lecture on The World's Great Events that Changed History. A fascinating overview of those events and people who dramatically affected our world. Yes, anything is possible; everything is not probable without massive changes in the world as we know it. As for the flood, I do not by any stretch of the imagination believed that it covered "the whole world" as the writers "whole world" as they knew it, encompassed a very small portion of the world in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Far more momentous events than 9/11 have occurred: this century has seen massive earthquakes that killed more than half a million people. It's all relative.

Trevor Hammond
2 weeks ago

- In a 1961 case in which a Sunday law was tacitly approved by the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren stated that Sunday Laws would always remain a violation of the First Amendment whenever it was demonstrated that their objective was "to use the State's coercive power to aid religion." (McGowan v. Maryland, 366 U.S. 420, 1961).
- In 1924 a New Jersey court invoked a 1798 blue law and found it illegal to play a phonograph or listen to the radio on Sunday because this was "music for the sake of merriment." A Sunday-law "spy" peering into the privacy of a Baltimore home in 1926 and seeing a man pressing his pants on Sunday, reported the act and the man was brought into court and fined. In Pennsylvania, the "Pittsburgh Sabbath Association" had the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra arrested for performing a concert on Sunday. In Washington County, Virginia, in 1932, a deputy sheriff arrested two women--one a crippled mother who walked with crutches--for washing clothes in her home. In a Philadelphia suburb it is recorded that a policeman arrested a boy for kicking a football on Sunday. When the father protested, the . . . policeman shot and killed the father." This was 1931.
- A partial review of court records reveals that in a one year period between 1895 and 1896,
over seventy-five American citizens were convicted of Sunday law offenses and were sentenced after fines to jails, chain gangs, etc., and served a total of 1,144 days.

- But on the state level, matters were different. Unshaken by the federal Bill of Rights, state after state passed Sunday laws, and for obviously stated religious reasons.
- Roger Williams is called the "father of religious liberty." ...But then the courts accused him of not agreeing with the established religion enforced by the government. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, fined 10,000 pounds, and facially disfigured,--his ears being cut off, his nose slit, and his face branded with a hot iron.
- "Captain Kemble, of Boston, was, in 1656, set for two hours in the public stocks, for his 'lewd and unseemly behavior,' which consisted in kissing his wife 'publicquely' " on Sunday morning on the doorstep of their home on his return from a three-year ocean voyage.
- The first Sunday law in America required church attendance of all, and decreed death upon the third offense. This was a Virginia Sunday law of 1610.

Preston Foster

Trevor,

Here's a little more that may help you understand my concerns.

First, to re-assure you of my motives, I believe the Sabbath is God's sanctified memorial of creation and the coda of creation itself. Further, I believe that, in the very end times, the Sabbath will be an indicator of alignment with and faith in the Creator God, as opposed to the traditions of man and the image or mark of the beast.

I believe that the Adventist reliance on grounding its defense of the Sabbath in the Old Covenant Law (e.g. the 10 Commandments) has led to only a partial embrace of the New Covenant (and a tepid relationship to grace) while causing us desperately hold on to bits of the Old Covenant. More importantly, holding on to the Old Covenant in any way, obscures and minimizes Christ, His sacrifice on the cross, and the grace of God (hence my problem with the 4th commandment being repeated as our "affirmation of faith").

As it is fairly easy for an objective Christian reader to understand that the Old Covenant has been done away, depending on the Old Covenant law only leaves the Sabbath vulnerable to the interpretation of those who take the Bible (when it is being literal) literally.

Establishing the Sabbath as the Bible has -- as being the sanctified, crowning act of creation, as being codified in the Old Covenant, as something Jesus observed, as a benefit for man, and as Christ's new testament intention for our worship after His death and ascension, in my mind ELEVATES the Sabbath more than does a simple reliance on the law of the Old Covenant as a raison d'être.

The point of all of this is, again, that in the New Covenant, our worship and service are to be led by the Spirit and motivated by love. In my opinion, an over-reliance on law has produced, in too many places, its predictable fruit: self- reliance, judgment, bitterness, frustration, and hypocrisy, to name a few. If we learn to walk in the Spirit, He will not lead us contrary to the law, but our works will be seen as selfless, loving, and attractive. And, still, our works righteousness is as filthy rags.
Thus, the desperate need for amazing grace.

Preston Foster  
2 weeks ago

Correction: the penultimate sentence should read, "And still, our works OF righteousness ARE as filthy rags."

I just proved it!

Trevor Hammond  
2 weeks ago

Brother Preston
The reason I am cautious when someone brings up BIG Grace is because so many times we tend as sinners to overlook the BIG sin problem which is why we have and need BIG Grace in the first place. I have heard many a person say that ‘as the Spirit moves’ or that when ‘moving in the Spirit’ then we are free which based on their fruits show that they interpret it as free to do as they please. This to me makes it seem as though some may presumptuously do the same that Israel did by adapting the Old Deal by adapting the New Deal - but this side of the Cross. Question is what ‘free’ do they refer to. If they would say free FROM sin then I would easily concur but to say free TO sin as though Grace will just keep covering presumptuous sinning is clearly off the mark. This brings us to the other extreme: cheap grace. We have to acknowledge the fact that the very purpose of both the Old and NEWer Covenants is Messiah. He is the common denominator.

**Matt 1:21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people FROM their sins.” The very name Jesus signifies a Saviour. A Saviour who saves his people FROM sin. Sin is revealed by the Law and therefore the Law has a place in all of this 1John 3:4. This principle is found both in the old and new testament. Law; Sin; Obedience and Righteousness are all integrated into the NEWer Covenant too. Under grace doesn’t mean there is no sin and that is does NOT make void the law Rom 3:31, as you have previously pointed out, (but this seems to now be a virtual law of some sort in this new deal dispensation whilst still based on the written law of some sort). Again, as you mention even in the previous blog, faith does not make void the law. So just how do we define the law? Has it been watered down somewhat (by God) in the new? Is sin not as treacherous and evil as revealed in the Old deal? I also will have to ask also whether Grace is just used by some as an excuse for compromise.

One has to also remember that this article could easily be used by proponents of ‘cheap grace' or ‘presumptuous sinning’ as an alibi or license for reckless sinful living by some saying: “Oh well, Grace is more important. We should focus on the ‘nailed to the cross’ imagery rather than the 'If you love me keep my commandments'. ” So is what Jesus saying different from what Paul is saying, or are we missing something? John 14:15. John 14:12,17,21; John 15:10; Rev 12:17; Rev 14:12,13; 1John 2:4,5,6; 1John 5:2’3; John 14:21,23; Matt 19:17,18,19; Dan 9:4; Eccl 12:13,14; 1John 3:4,5,6. So even Jesus mentions the commandments: even some from the Ten. The Old Testament’s distinctive acknowledgment, respect and awe for God’s Law, is not in the least bit lessened in the NEWer covenant which by faith is written on our hearts. The SDA Church too, is full of many who have been saved and are been saved by Grace or the new deal. Just because we uphold the virtue of God’s word as summarized in the Ten, doesn’t and hasn’t lessened our NEWer Deal Grace of which too I (and you) are big recipients of. Praise God! The Law and Grace have their rightful place and they do not cancel each other out as it is Grace that put Jesus on the Cross just as much as the Law did. In my opinion of course.
Furthermore, I would also like to point my view that Grace was always the catalyst in terms of salvation even in the Old Testament AND the Old Covenant too just like in the New, albeit which fulfilled types and symbols in Christ. The Bible nowhere teaches salvation my human works alone. God is always in Christ (Messiah) offering the Promise and heralding the 'Gospel of the Kingdom' throughout the Holy Bible. Noah Gen 6:8-9, Abraham Gen 17:1, David Ps 51:10-11, and then also Zechariah 13:1 which speaks of a fountain for sin and uncleanness, also pointing towards Messianic Righteousness by Faith. This obviously was God’s intention too in the Old Covenant which was distorted by Israel not seeing this in the types and symbols and ceremonies which by Faith pointed to Messiah. They made this into a burdensome works orientated religion which Jesus abrogated (nailed) at the Cross when He fulfilled the types and symbols and ceremonies which were a representation of Him and nailed them χειρόγραφον at the Cross.

♥T

laffal 2 weeks ago

Brother Trevor,

Your concern is valid in the sense that the gospel rightly understood is dangerous from that standpoint of overreaching the freedom of Christ to mean we can now do as we please. So many of us Adventists jump on anything that we remotely think to be "once saved, always saved." The problem with this is that we have tended to throw the gospel baby out with the bathwater. And instead of experiencing / demonstrating / witnessing the freedom from sin... we defend doctrine / law / obedience to the extent that we short circuit our own freedom, while retaining some measurable portion of legalism, if only in the terminology of the defense itself.

If we don't learn to read / hear out carefully what one another has to say on these matters, we will continue to exercise ourselves to no real good purpose. Although I do appreciate your explanation of grace here. But we do waste so much time and energy chasing rabbits that really have nothing to do with what is actually being said / meant. It might be a good thing to ask questions pertaining to the articles / statements by which we can further the discussion / understanding together as opposed to assertions / standoffs that lead us to what?

Just to be clear, I share a great deal of concern with Preston in the point / purpose of his last few posts. We SDA's have any number of in-house issues that need to become clarified so that the necessary understanding and purpose of the gospel of grace may be experienced by all who will. The question is; how do we get there? Imagine what it was like for the disciples in the upper room after the ascension of Christ. I can see them as being brutally honest, yet filled with love for Christ and one another. That's when the unity came... and they were blessed with the out pouring of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless us to see / hear / understand / do likewise that we may receive the long awaited blessing.

Peace
In my mind, if someone wants freedom TO sin, clearly, they are not walking in the Spirit. I see our mission less as defenders of the law and more as ambassadors of Christ. In the end, Christ will judge those who abuse the grace He has provided for our salvation. I will leave that to Him.

Grace can be abused. But we are also warned, in many places, about using the law to establish our own righteousness or for "bragging rights," (Ephesians 2:8-9) Dependence on the law can lead us away from dependance on Christ, His righteousness, and His grace.

If we are leading others to Christ, rather than to the law, HE does the work of converting the heart and embuing us with His Spirit.

If the law is written in our hearts as the Word says, it is MORE real than laws written in stone. It is a walk of faith. Abraham was given the promise, through faith from the start (Romans 4:2-13 KJV). We depend on what is written in stone only to be led to Christ. From that point on, we are to be led by His Spirit (Galatians 3:24-25).

Our discomfort with being led by the Spirit was addressed in my earlier article, "What Holy Ghost?" Our discomfort with the concept of not being under the law, I believe, comes from a lack of intimacy with the Holy Ghost which leaves us feeling unmoored and vulnerable to sin -- needing the law as our guide. In the New Covenant, the law remains the standard (as it is not made void), but it is not our guide; the Holy Spirit is (Galatians 5:18).

That, I believe, is the difference that is both most clear and most difficult to embrace, as it requires absolute faith ("evidence of things not seen").

We are saved by grace and not works of the law. Our good works are the evidence, the identifiers (the fruit) of our surrender to self and of the righteousness of Christ working in us. In short, our obedience is the end, rather than the means of conversion. The verse that is quoted to make opposing points, if read literally, actually explains "the order of service," if you will: "IF YOU LOVE ME, keep my commandments." Love comes first and is the premise of obedience.

And the law of love is the law of the New Covenant. What would change if we focused on keeping that law? Yes, Christ wanted works ("If ye love me, feed my sheep"). However, he commanded love-based works, in accordance with the new commandment He gave us.

If Christ is in us, and we in Him a change will be evident and convincing to others. That, I believe, is the witness of His Kingdom come to this earth.
A few questions for reflection.

1. When Paul wrote about the Old Covenant at Sinai in Gal 4, was that Covenant primarily the Law? An agreement based on the Law? or both? Are the Law and the Covenant the same, or different? If so, what is the difference?

2. The passage about the Old and New Covenants in Heb 8 quotes from Jer 31:31-34. When Jeremiah wrote that God would write His Law on the hearts of His people, what Law was he talking about?

3. Are the Laws to be written on the heart (Heb 8) different from the Law in Jer 31? If so, what is the evidence, and what is the difference? In Heb 8, do the "laws" to be written on hearts under the New Covenant include the 10 Commandment Law, or are they clearly excluded? Are all included except the fourth?

4. The 10 Commandments are obviously more specific and detailed than the "law of love" mentioned above. Is there any other difference? Do they conflict in any way with the Law of Love? If so, which Commandment(s) is/are inconsistent with love? Did God want for any of them, including the Sabbath, to be observed for any other reason than love -- His love for His earthly children and their love for Him?

5. Is there any necessary conflict between the 10 Commandments and grace? Does grace include only justification, or is there such a thing as sanctification by grace? If so, does it include grace to live increasingly in harmony with the them?

6. What does Paul mean by writing that we are not "under law" but "under grace" in Rom 6:14? Under condemnation of the Law? Under jurisdiction of the Law? Under the law as a means of being justified? Are Christians "under" the law of love? If so, would that be any better or easier than being under the Law? If so, how so?

7. What does Paul mean by "under grace" in Rom 6:14? Is "under grace" as a means of being justified?

7. What does Paul mean in Rom 8:3, 4 by saying that the "righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit?" What law is he referring to? What does he mean by "fulfilled?" What does he mean by "walking" after the Spirit?"

Would short, thoughtful biblical answers to these questions be helpful? I would be especially interested in Preston's response.
Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

Just one more question perhaps, to add to those mentioned above.

Was Adam and Eve under Grace or under Law in the Garden of Eden when God said to them: "Do not eat of the the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? After all, God did establish a Law when He asked them to obey. [Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.] Remember that this was even before the fall. A point to also note here is that the Sabbath (and union of man and wife in marriage) were established BEFORE the fall at Creation: In the beginning.

♥I

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Yes, God did tell Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He also gave the command to be fruitful and multiply. But it only says that God RESTED on the seventh day because he had completed his work, period. There is no command whatsoever for Adam and Eve to rest on that day, which was their first day of being, but the seventh day of God's creative acts. He gave them only two commands, mentioned above, but not one word about "rest" on a day. In addition, there is not one single record of anyone observing a day of rest until Sinai, despite Adventists constant claim it was given at Creation. Why is the Bible corrupted by such additions? Is the record insufficient without man's adding to it?

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

...And that's why God didn't remind us to 'be fruitful and multiply' - we seem to enjoy obeying that one ☺; but have forgotten the Sabbath like Israel, hence His reminder to REMEMBER the Sabbath Day TO KEEP IT HOLY. Seventh-day Adventists are the called as 'proclaimers' of this truth and are called to also preach the Sabbath message to REMEMBER its significance which bears the name and seal of God's authority, sovereignty and dominion as Creator, Ruler, Custodian, Blessed Redeemer and the Giver of true Rest. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation!

Another point to note regarding the pre-Sinai establishment of the Sabbath is found in Exod 16:28,29,30 And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments
and my laws? See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

This was asked of them even BEFORE Sinai which comes later in Exod 19:1. This proves yet again that the Holy Seventh-day Sabbath found in the Decalogue and upheld and heralded by Seventh-day Adventists IS an Eternal Precept established right 'In the Beginning' by God Himself before the Fall of man: and who better to establish such - but the Almighty Creator Himself. Obedience to the Law of God IN CHRIST JESUS by His GRACE is our response to His working in our lives through the Holy Spirit. Now that is a really BIG DEAL!

♥T

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

An additional note to my previous post in response to Mrs Nelson's post that mentions God's command to Adam and Eve to be 'fruitful and multiply'.

I might as well add that the homosexual community won't be obeying 'the fruitful and multiply' part and would be the exception in this regard.

♥T

Ymous 1 week ago

Elaine

Looks like this topic may have pretty much run its course, but if you check back in, I have a few short questions for you.

According to Genesis 2:3, when God rested (ceased) from His work of creating the world on the seventh day, He "blessed" and "sanctified" (set apart for a sacred purpose) the seventh day as the Sabbath.

1. For whom did He set the day apart for a sacred purpose? For Himself, or for human beings whom He had created? Or perhaps for both?

2. If it was for human beings, does it seem likely or unlikely that Adam and Eve were aware of what He had done?

3. If they were aware of it, does it seem likely unlikely that they would either assume or be told that He desired for them to observe it?

I would be interested in your answers to these questions if you tune in here again and have the time and inclination to respond. In the meantime, take care and Godbless.
Vernon P. Wagner 1 week ago

Assuming the creation story is semi-factual, perhaps the Creator's 'rest' meant a decision from on high to stop the creative process (I dare not say evolution) after Primates had been given thumbs?

Question #2 above is profound.
No idea as to what they knew, or when, because scribes had not been invented.

Question #3 can only be answered after answering #2.

Timo Onjukka 1 week ago

A note to the respondents; please refrain from adding blanks space below your posts. Helps keep the comments threads compact and easily readable.

Ymous, Seems subsequent canon suggests Sabbath was not just for God. It was for man, his servants, and animals, in perpetuity. However, worship of "the day" (and proving ones own perfect adherence to it) has apparently taken precedence in form of worship. Not to be confused with worship of Creator.

The second question entertains that a written form of language was requisite for accurately (and verifiably?) passing down prior knowledge. Even if scribes had existed and chronicled it in some form, our translation of their scratchings potentially fraught with broad misinterpretation. Note the seeming conflict between creation chronology between the first and second chapters.

Perhaps even oral communication developed and evolved, or did God merely download a "Rosetta Stone" into Adam, providing him non-experiential, non-contextual language? If so, what is the original pre-fall "native language" of humans? Perhaps man was (esp prior the ziggurat @ Babel) a wholistic vehicle of communication. Perhaps constraints of written (and spoken) communication by their very nature introduce more guile than provide veracity and certainty. But i diverge from the OT..sorry Preston!

On another note. Mr Hammond notes an oft-missed point.
The one-flesh covenant (the first, and the "template" of forthcoming God-man covenant) was the first thing sanctified in pre-fall garden.
Seems the next day may have been a celebration of relationship, a type of honeymoon, if you dare.
Elaine Nelson

"Rest" has different meanings. Consider an attorney in court when he has completed his statements: "I rest my case," meaning it has been completed.

We have no record of a written language prior the Egyptian hierglyphics which have been dated ca 3,000 B.C. The first law code, Hammurabi's, ca. 1750 B.C. The Law received by Moses, ca. 1220 B.C. However, the earliest possible date for the Law, or Torah put in writing was no earlier than ca. 600 B.C., and that is known as the Priest's edition, as there are several different accounts of much of the Torah as demonstrated in the two creation stories, the two flood stories, and others.

It is inconceivable that these stories were orally passed down through so many generations exactly as originally told. There were interpretations of the story-tellers, editions and deletions, and of course, a great deal of hyperbole that defies credibility.

Not until the Law given to Moses was sabbath ever a command to humans. It was given in recognition of their former servitude as slaves and their exodus from the slave-holders, giving them a day free from work. The Priests, responsible for writing the Law and the Creation story in Gen. 1 were intent on emphasizing the Israelites of the Law which was the reason for their captivity.

However, in the Sinai, the Israelites, former slaves, were a largely agrarian economy and the necessary chores required care for their animals every day; the priests also had to perform their duties as well; the women were not mentioned in the Fourth Commandment and they still had their usual chores. Was there a great deal of change on any day, given the agrarian economy in which they lived?

Steve Tanner

Having taught Sabbath school class many years I have often asked the question..Ary you saved? I never get much comment from that question. Some will say Yes, but...
Maybe we should preach on Grace and saved by faith in Jesus a lot more often so all will know weather they are saved or not.
My Bible says believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved. To me it's simple, Yes I am a sinner as we all are. I know Jesus paid the price for me. It gives me great peace. Prais God for what He has done for us all.
Steve

Preston Foster

Ymous and Trevor,

My premise is not that the law of the Old Covenant is wrong. It is not. It is, according to the Bible, the Old Covenant that was imperfect (Hebrews 8:7-8, 13). Still, that is not the point that I am positioning here. The point is, again, that by grounding Sabbath observance (again, I am profoundly “pro-Sabbath”) exclusively in the law of the Old Covenant (see Fundamental Belief
#19), which has (arguably) ended (2 Corinthians 3:6-7, 11, Hebrews 9:14-15, Ephesians 2:15), but not voided, we inadvertently risk the theological viability of the Sabbath -- particularly with Christians of other faiths, and, also, (by leaning on the Old Covenant) mitigate grace, which is the means of our salvation.

Now, regarding some of your questions:

*When Paul wrote about the Old Covenant at Sinai in Galatians 4, was that Covenant primarily the Law? An agreement based on the Law? or both? Are the Law and the Covenant the same, or different? If so, what is the difference?*

To me, it is clear, that Paul was referencing the law primarily, and, in the context of the allegory, the two covenants referenced in Galatians 4:24, the promise of the New Covenant, regarding freedom from the law (Galatians 4:30-31). In the introduction to Galatians 4, Paul references the purpose of Christ’s first advent -- “to redeem them that were under the law” (Galatians 4:5). Galatians 4:9, 21 provide the context of the allegory regarding the differences in the covenants: freedom vs. bondage. Clearly, Galatians 5 (the entire chapter), makes it clear, that it is the law that was the subject of Paul Galatians 4 allegory.

*The 10 Commandments are obviously more specific and detailed than the "law of love" mentioned above. Is there any other difference? Do they conflict in any way with the Law of Love? If so, which Commandment(s) is/are inconsistent with love? Did God want for any of them, including the Sabbath, to be observed for any other reason than love -- His love for His earthly children and their love for Him?*

From a laypersons perspective, one obvious difference between the 10 Commandments and the law of love, is that the world “love” appears no where in the decalogue (though God’s purpose in giving the to us was, if fact, love -- and, I believe, to prove to us that we, in our own power, can do nothing). Still, the absence of the word has led, I believe, to a sometimes unloving, judgmental, and works-based approach to law-keeping. The difference, in my mind, stems not from what God and Christ said in the 10 Commandments and the law of love, respectively, but the conditions under which they apply. The law of the Old Covenant was given in response to a request for clarity (and, in my opinion, out of the fleshly assumption that man could do it). Christ had to come to earth and live the perfect life that no man could, to fulfill the law of God. Christ gave the law of love to us, to communicate the priority of His Kingdom.

In my view, the conflict comes is arises in two places 1) how humans judge other humans in terms of the need for, the requirements, and specific application of commandment keeping (Romans 2:19-29), and 2) most importantly, the process and motives for commandment keeping; specifically law-keeping out of obligation and obedience to the law, or being led into with communion with the will of God by the Holy Spirit. Some believe the former constitutes legalism, while others believe the latter to be bordering on antinomianism.

*What does Paul mean by writing that we are not "under law" but "under grace" in Rom 6:14? Under condemnation of the Law? Under jurisdiction of the Law? Under the law as a means of being justified? Are Christians "under" the law of love? If so, would that be any better or easier than being under the Law? If so, how so? 7. What does Paul mean by "under grace" in Romans 6:14? Is "under grace" as a means of being justified?*

Being not under the law, I believe means that, in Christ and His righteousness, the requirements of the law have been satisfied (by His life and death on the Cross). The law is to lead us to Christ...
(Galatians 3:24-26). If we are in Christ, we are lead by His Spirit (Galatians 5:18, Romans 8:9-10), which is our guide, not the specific, but limited requirements of the law, engraved in stone (2 Corinthians 3:6-8). Paul was speaking plainly (2 Corinthians 3:1-14). I see no hidden meaning. If we are in Christ, the law -- and its penalties do not apply to us (Romans 8:2-4, 2 Corinthians 1:9-10, 2 Corinthians 3:16-17). Not that the law is voided, but because, in Christ, our sins are covered by His blood. What else would allow Paul to say, with confidence, relatively unstructured things such as he did in Romans 14:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 10:23?

Likewise, being “under grace” is, to me, straight-forward. We, who are in Christ and led by the Spirit, live and operate under grace through faith in Jesus. For me, the primary reason to rejoice in grace is that is, quite profoundly, how we are saved. Grace points to Christ, alone, and what He has done for us. The law points to us: our sin, our guilt, and our inadequate works (Philippians 3:9, 1 Timothy 1:9-15). Being under grace says, to me, Christ is our righteousness (Titus 3:5-7). When the Father looks at us, because of His grace, He sees only Christ (, Ephesians 2:13-18, Colossians 1:12-14). We are, then, because of being under grace, reconciled to The Father (Colossians 1:19-22).

I believe we are, in all respects, under the law of love (1 John 4:8, 11, 15-17, 21).

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Preston,

You have given an admirable explanation of the two covenants. That they are still confusing to Adventists is most apparent. Do other Christian churches have such difficulty? If not, why not? Could it be because so many Adventist doctrines are taken directly from the Old Testament? I believe that is one very important reason. When the distinctive doctrines of Adventism can only be shown from the Pentateuch, or the Old Covenant, it compounds the necessity for repeated explanations.

If one restricts his reading for doctrines of the Christian church (how can one find Christian doctrines from Judaism?) there will be no problems. Paul then becomes crystal clear: the Old Covenant was fulfilled at the cross and we are now living under the New Covenant. **To live under the Old Covenant is to deny the efficacy of the cross.** All the texts above simply reinforce this.

For the Jews sabbath was almost central; all life revolved around its proper observance; one can see this by the multitudes of activities that must be done or prohibited surrounding the sabbath. Paul rejected Judaism as a way to be accepted by Christ: he did away with circumcision--the first mark of a Jew-- and with that, all other practices were also done away with. The very few remaining were given in several places in the NT and only involved food offered to idols, blood, and fornication.

He also put the Law in its proper place: to guide one to Christ and since He has come, we are no longer bound by the Law but freed from its demands. There is no other reason why Adventistism has consistently since its birth been faced with difficulties in explaining this New Covenant is because of insistence that sabbath is still binding. There is nothing in the New Testament that Christians are to observe any day, thus the confusion and it will continue as long as the refusal to take Paul just as he is.
Steve: Perhaps the question ought be posed, since your name is already scribed in the book, and salvation has been proven through firstfruits, are you LOST?

"I have made you son of promised inheritance; how long will you believe yourself an orphan?"

Elaine,

Thanks for your kind words.

However, I disagree with your conclusion: "There is nothing in the New Testament that Christians are to observe any day, thus the confusion and it will continue as long as the refusal to take Paul just as he is."

Hebrews 4 does exactly that, with specificity regarding the 7th day, in the context of creation:

1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.[a] 3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,
   "So I declared on oath in my anger,
   ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”[b]

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: 'On the seventh day God rested from all his works.'[c] 5 And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

6 Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, 7 God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

   “Today, if you hear his voice,
   do not harden your hearts.”[d]

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works,[e] just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.
Jesus the Great High Priest

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,[f] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

These passages, in addition to Genesis 2:1-2, Exodus 20:8-14, and Revelation 14:7 (along with multiple texts that document Sabbath-keeping), that, in my opinion, show the constancy of the Sabbath throughout the history of the world. In my opinion, that is the best approach to ground the Adventist belief in Sabbath observance.

I believe, the Holy Spirit will lead seekers to see the clarity of God's intent for the Sabbath, which spans covenants and lasts, I believe, into eternity.

Preston Foster 1 week ago

Then note in my last post should read: "(along with multiple texts that document CHRIST'S Sabbath-keeping)."

Thanks.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Preston, that is almost invariably the retort when sabbath observance is questioned: Christ observed the sabbath.

Well, yes and no. Why was he accused of breaking the sabbath? Who judged him? Who decides proper Sabbath observance?

Jesus was born, lived and died a good Jew. He was never called a Christian, as Christianity was born following the Resurrection. Jesus was born, lived and died a Jew: was circumcised, observed the dietary rules, and all the other feasts and celebrations of Judaism. Should we observe all of them as he did? Where are Christians told to observe the Jewish feasts and festivals of which Sabbath is included in Lev. 23?

Where are Christians instructed to observe any day as holy? Why would Paul say that no man should be judged on the observance of days? Or that we are not bound by the Law but now freed from that which enslaved us? To what Law was he referring?

Adventists would not have known of the sabbath and its many rules from the NT. They had to add both the day and its many and proper rules from the OT. **There was never a day for Christians to be considered holy and it cannot be shown from the NT which are the Christians guide, not the OT.** If the NT is insufficient for Christian living and doctrine, what should a church be called if it is a mixture of both?

This is why Adventists have been called cults--neither fish nor fowl.
Elaine,

It would seem to me that the retort, "Christ observed the Sabbath," is non-trivial. In fact, as Christians and followers of Christ, it would seem that anything Jesus did would bear significance, including how Christ kept the Sabbath (including healing and helping).

The New Testament passage from the Apostle Paul (the original radical grace preacher), "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works,[e] just as God did from his," seems, to me to be all encompassing (i.e., "for the people of God, for anyone . . . ").

What is it about Hebrews 4 that is unconvincing to you on that point?

Elaine and to everyone,

Too many (from both sides of this issue) seem to fall into the same trap. That is (Side A) claiming either we are still under the law and obligated to keep the Sabbath OR (Side B, claiming without the law, there is no need to observe the Sabbath.

The "third way" is to be led by the Spirit into the will of God. This requires purposeful and continual submission of our will.

Paul saying that we should not judge others regarding their observance of days does not make our knowledge of the Sabbath a moot point. Observing the Sabbath is, to me, both a blessing to me and an acknowledgment of submission to God and my understanding of His will for mankind. As the Sabbath is a memorial to creation, observing it reminds me how all this (i.e., life on earth) began.

There have been and are many blogs on this site which prove why that is necessary.

How is the New Covenant superior to the Old if all the rules and Law is still in effect as it was under the Old Covenant? What is new about it?

I agree when you say that "observing the Sabbath is, to me, both a blessing and acknowledgement of submission to God." Presuming that your belief is the correct one for everyone else does not submit to Paul's statement of "letting everyone be persuaded in his own mind." Does that infer that there is only one "mind" on this? To me, if flies in the face of his statement in more than one place about the Law and mentions special yearly, monthly and sabbath days. What are the conclusions that you draw from his statements? Was he referring to something other than the Jewish practice of the timing of the many special occasions? What is your take on these:
"One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind."

"Therefore, let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second....When he said 'A new covenant;' He has made the first obsolete."

"He takes away the first in order to establish the second."

What are there differences between the former, or first covenant, and the new one, or second covenant? If there is proof that the sabbath is necessary, what texts from the NT support that position?

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**Preston Foster** 1 week ago

Elaine,

The New Covenant does not make us God's unto ourselves. We are to be led by the Holy Spirit, not the law, to live in the will of God. It is inconceivable to me that the Holy Spirit will lead us in a way that is contrary to God's will or law.

The difference between covenants is that in the New, we are, thru Christ, reconciled to God, by grace. We can speak directly to The Father, in Christ's name. If we confess our sins, they will be forgiven, and we will take on the righteousness of Christ, who is our perfection. The difference is that we are free in Christ, from the yoke of the law -- and its death penalty. We are saved -- if we accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

The key to the New Covenant is not freedom from the law. The key is being led by the Spirit -- which frees us from the law. Without the Spirit, we need the law, as we are sinful and willful (1 Timothy 1:9-15).

The point isn't whether the Sabbath is "necessary." The point is, do we love God and seek to do His will? The point is whether we are in love enough to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us.

The New Covenant is superior because it is love-driven. Grace and the law may lead us to lead similar lives in terms of behavior. But, under grace, the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, long-suffering, etc.) will flow through us.

If you (or anyone is not convinced) of the need and benefit of Sabbath observance, that is between God, the Holy Spirit, and you. I simply ask, again, what is it about Hebrews 4 that is unclear, burdensome, or unconvincing? It's not about law; it's about entering into His rest.
These last few blogs are appearing more and more to be a spiritual catharsis of sorts for you, as you continue to unpack the logic of the 2 Covenants. Your terminology and the attending logic is getting clearer by the response.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Preston,

I also believe that Hebrews 4 is explaining the meaning of sabbath: we are to enter into God's rest. It is a relationship, not a day which is important. It is a new understanding brought in by Jesus, not realized in the original intent and meaning of the Fourth Commandment.

Preston Foster 1 week ago

Elaine,

Well, I'll let you explain that to my wife if I choose to arbitrarily celebrate a wedding anniversary of my choosing . . .

Celebrating our anniversary is done out of love not obligation -- but I'm sure she appreciates it (and believes I love her more) if I get the day right (especially if she reminds me).

Smiles.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Point made. Does sabbath have the same meaning in Exodus as it does in Hebrews 4? Is Sabbath of equal importance in the Old as the New covenant? Given the multiple times sabbath is referred to in the OT, is it of the same importance in the NT?

Is your marriage more important than the date of your wedding? If you had to be away (military service) for several years and unable to celebrate your wedding anniversary, are you still married? Millions of partners (usually men) forget their wedding date, but are they still married? Is the symbol more important than what it represents?

Help me to understand your interpretation of how sabbath is used and meant in Heb. 4.

laffal 1 week ago

Elaine,

Your questions about the Old & New Covenant will never find satisfaction as long as you use a model that is not Biblical. The only real difference between the Old & New Covenant's is who
makes the promise to keep the law for the salvation of the human family. The Old Covenant is Israel making the promise to do "all that the Lord has spoken." Exodus 19:8; 24:7 The New Covenant is God's promise thru His Son, Jesus Christ, to keep the law on our behalf.

God knew that Israel would fail to keep their promise to keep His law, so He had Moses institute the Sanctuary Service to teach the New Covenant to the Jews. Everything in the Sanctuary Services pointed to one facit or another or Christ's work of redemption for mankind, including the Feast Days.

So, if there is a difference between the law / Sabbath when it comes down to the Old and New Covenants, it motivation. The Old Covenant is based on the fear of punishment, and the desire for a reward. While the New Covenant is based on love and appreciation for the free of salvation purchased by the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Sabbath keeping in the Old Covenant is resting for our works, as opposed to Sabbath keeping under the New Covenant which is resting in the completed work of creation / salvation / the hope of eternal restoration.

Peace

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

Regarding Colossians 2:16:
This passage has been incorrectly been used as a license to eat pork, drink liquor and trample the Fourth Commandment, by some; and by others to argue against the Ten Commandments and our Health Message or even worse still, to the extent that ‘cheap grace’ or presumptuous sinning is advocated; to put it in a nutshell. Col 2:14 clearly refers to ‘Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances’ which was ‘contrary to us’. It was THIS that was ‘nailed to the cross’ thereby fulfilling them in the antitype Christ Jesus by His death on the Cross. These were ceremonies pointing to Him in the symbols and types of the Old Covenant.

Heb 9:1 reveals that the ‘first covenant’ had these ‘ordinances’ added to it in the form of symbolic ceremonies and types which pointed to Messiah. Here (Heb 9:1-9) we find that Paul begins his discussion of the law focussing rather, on the ‘ordinances which were added’ and NOT the Ten Commandments, which were written by the finger of God on tablets of stone (Ex 31:18). In these verses Paul makes no reference to the Ten. In Heb 9:10 he concludes by describing these ‘ordinances’ as ‘carnal’. The Law of God as seen in the Ten Commandments is NOT carnal but spiritual (Rom 7:14). He therefore speaks not of the spiritual Law (Ten Commandments) but of the carnal ordinances which were added to the law ‘because of transgressions’ (Gal 3:19). Col 2:20,21 states that if we are ‘dead with Christ’ then we are not ‘subject to ordinances’ and that we ought not to touch, taste and handle these which have been abrogated at the Cross. That is the ORDINANCES that were ADDED to the LAW and written by the hand of Moses (2Chron 33:8, Ex 24:4, Deut 31:24, Deut 29:21 – note: the CURSE of the law, Deut 30:10). Ps 19:7 calls the LAW of GOD PERFECT yet the ordinances on the other hand refer to the law of Moses as containing curses, the latter which was NOT placed in the ark with the Ten Commandments. To conflate these two and assert that Paul made no distinction is not in line with ALL that Paul wrote.

I should point out at this stage that we seem to have zoned in on the CURSE of sin as a result of transgressing the Law and assume that it is the TOTALITY of what it stands for in this regard. This is not the way even the Old Testament writers viewed God’s Law and even the ceremonial laws for that matter which became a curse because of disobedience and rebellion, yet it was NOT only about curses, there were many good teachings and blessings associated with in these ordinances.
which came to an end, of course – at the Cross. This can be seen when we look at the broader picture like many OT writers. Therefore we need to look at who Paul writes to. Those who caught up in attempting salvation by works by subscribing to ordinances of handwriting which after the Cross was a curse to those who still clung to it and not Christ only. Of course there are always those who will try to keep the Ten Commandments on their own but this does not negate the broader picture of a Holy, Righteous, Perfect, Honourable, Worthy, (Ex 24:12, Ps 1:2, Ps 119:1, Ps 40:8, Ps 119:18, Ps 119:29 – Graciously?, Ps 119:72, Ps 119:77, Ps 119:26 – make void?, Ps 119:42 – law is Truth?, Law. Ps 119:174 distinguishes the difference between salvation and the role of the Law. The first refers to ‘thy salvation Lord’ and then the Law is called ‘delight’. They are two separate doctrines. The Law cannot administer salvation; but salvation does not in turn make void the Law. Both have distinct functions: both come from God.

Heb 9:10 from verse one echoes these sentiments: “Heb 9:10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.” The handwriting which literally translates as ‘something written by hand’ on parchment (ceremonial law) in contrast to God writing the Ten Commandments on stone which Paul proclaims (Heb 8:10, Heb 10:16) and quotes from Jeremiah (Jer 31:3) that they are written on our hearts through Christ our Lord by virtue of His Grace through the Holy Spirit and the Gal 2:20 experience which, I might add, affords the believer the declaration of Righteousness (by faith).

♥T

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

Oops some typo's:
Jer 31:3 should be Jer 31:33
Ps 119:42 should be Ps 119:142
Ps 119:26 should be Ps 119:126

Kevin Riley 1 week ago

But, if you follow the Biblical distinction between the 10 in the ark and the rest outside, then the ceremonial law includes much more than just the sacrifices and ceremonies. It is literally everything except the 10 commandments. It is much better to accept that what was nailed to the cross was our debt, not the law in any form.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

One cannot find the law against eating pork in the Ten Commandments. It comes from the 600+ rules found in the Pentateuch which was given to the Israelites. If these rules were no longer valid, how can the clean-unclean meats be considered valid? Or, has it been done on a "pick-and-choose" method with no discernable criteria? Why are the dietary or Kosher laws still valid but the clean-unclean period for both males and females is no longer valid? Please explain on the basis of biblical exegesis.

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago
Please explain with Biblical exegesis where Jesus ate pork! ...and where Jesus (as a Jew) did NOT follow the Kosher 'eating' laws...

Remember this is not in the context of what Paul addresses with the Gentiles in Col 2:16. I only said that some USE this verse as an excuse...

♥T

Preston Foster

Trevor,

I don't eat pork and don't recommend it.

How do you deal with these texts (Romans 14)?

1Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

2For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

3Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

4Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

5One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

6He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

10But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a
stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

14I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

16Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

17For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

19Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

22Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

23And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

laffal 1 week ago

Preston,

Romans 14:1-3 is talking about food offered to idols... not flesh food (beef, pork, chicken, or fish...etc.). In the time of Paul, the pagan priests would take the food brought to the temple for sacrifice, and the priest would take to the market and sell the food. So the issue is this, should a Christian refrain from eating food offered to idols. There were those that said... definately. These are those whom Paul identified as the weak. Then there were those that knew that the idol / temple / pagan priest could not effect perfectly good food simply because of how it got to the priest / market. Paul identifies those as the strong.

The principle at issue then is that the strong are not to judge the weak because they are "fanatical" about what kind of food we should or should not be eating, or whether or not we want to observe the feast days. Romans 14 is about judging others who do not necessarily see like / agree with you on matters that are not essential to salvation. I have used vs 17 many times to back off those who were pressing me to be a vegetarian. Interestingly enough, when I notified them that I had finally went to the vegetarian diet, some 13 years ago, then they wanted to take
some kind of credit for my decision making.

Judge not! That's what this passage is all about... we all have to stand before God in judgment...

first things first...

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Trevor, please re-read my question which was for a biblical exegesis where the kosher laws were still valid in the NT after the Resurrection and with the first conversions of Gentiles. I did not ask for a text where Jesus ate pork! He was certainly not a vegetarian, but no good Jew ate pork then, and none to this day.

Preston Foster 1 week ago

laffal (and Trevor),

That is what I see in that passage.

A subtle, but dangerous enticement of a law-driven focus is to judge the actions of others and to compare their actions and motives with ours. What the Spirit has led us to and the path that we have taken may be (and is likely) different than others. Although the destination may be the same, God deals with us based on our hearts and His grace. Jesus is the only way.

This is why no works of the law are adequate for our salvation. Again, it is not the law that is problematic; it is us.

We have no righteousness of our own, only His. He is the only one righteous enough to judge, forgive, save, or convict.

Trevor Hammond 1 week ago

Remember that while men have been cautioned NOT to judge: God can and will.

♥T

Preston Foster 1 week ago

Trevor,

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22.

This is why it is imperative to be in Christ. Christ satisfied the requirements of the law by His life and death. The Father's law must be satisfied. Christ is our friend, our advocate, our judge, and our Saviour.
This is why the New Covenant and its provisions for grace are vital to our salvation. It is difficult if not impossible to have a loving, trusting relationship with a judge who holds the power of life and death over us. Even if we keep the law out of a spirit of fear and expected reward for our works, it is for nought. It is far easier and authentic to have a loving relationship, born of gratitude, with a Savior, advocate, and friend. We will seek to please Him from a heart of love, rather than fear.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.

It is very good news.

Trevor Hammond

Amen! Brother Preston, Amen! I'm with you on this one...
♥

Trevor Hammond

Sir, while I did fully concur with you last post I would like to make another comment which you have alluded to somewhat. Paul in Rom 4:13-14 [Rom 4:13 For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. Rom 4:14 For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.], is quite clear regarding the 'promise' and Righteousness by Faith in the OT which would obviously teach Grace in the OT. Christians today relate to that same promise rather than the issues Paul raises with the Galations etc. While these NT admonishments may give us food for thought and direct our focus to the Provision God has provided in Christ instead of works orientated salvation, they have little direct significance to us who have NOT entered into such a covenant for it has been fulfilled in Christ at the Cross. By default, this side of the Cross, we enter into the Promise just the same but in Messiah Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Again, I say, that the fulfilled types and symbols of Messiah have been ABROGATED by His death on the Cross and by his precious blood. His Righteousness is imputed and imparted to us and transforms our lives through the Spirit's working in us.

These verses of late have caught my attention and speak for themselves regarding the LAW of.....FAITH? ☺. Here they are:

Rom 3:20 Inasmuch as, by works of law, shall no flesh be declared righteous before him,—through law, in fact, is discovery of sin.
Rom 3:21 But now, apart from law, a righteousness of God hath been manifested, borne witness to by the law and the prophets,—
Rom 3:22 A righteousness of God, through faith in [Jesus] Christ, unto all that have faith; for there is no distinction,—
Rom 3:23 For, all, have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;
Rom 3:24 Being declared righteous freely by his favour through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:—
Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth as a propitiatory covering, through faith in his blood, for a
showing forth of his righteousness, by reason of the passing–by of the previously committed sins,

**Rom 3:26** In the forbearance of God,—with a view to a showing forth of his righteousness in the present season, that he might be righteous even when declaring righteous him that hath faith in Jesus.

**Rom 3:27** Where, then, the boasting! It is excluded. Through what kind of law? Of works? Nay! but through a law of faith:

In these profound writings of Paul I see the 'balance' and rightful place of God's law in all of this especially in terms of the 'Promise' to Abraham. I have also found, out of interest, that BEFORE Sinai (about 3 months perhaps), but after leaving Egypt God taught the Israelites to observe the Sabbath in the experience of the 'manna' from heaven. So pre-Sinai, the Sabbath was still a binding part of those who follow the God of Heaven.

...And this was BEFORE Sinai.

**Exod 16:25** Then said Moses—Eat ye it today, for, a sabbath, is today, unto Yahweh,—today, ye shall not find it in the field.

**Exod 16:26** Six days, shall ye gather it,—but, on the seventh day, a sabbath, it shall not be therein.

**Exod 16:27** And it came to pass, on the seventh day, that there went forth some of the people to gather,—but they found not.

**Exod 16:28** Then said Yahweh unto Moses,—How long have ye refused to keep my commandments and my laws?

I'm not saying that you say the Sabbath is made void. I'm saying that we can't use Paul to detract from the obligation for the observance of the Law of God and the Sabbath. (Obviously all this in Christ and by His indwelling through the Holy Spirit)

♥T

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**Preston Foster**

3 days ago

Brother Trevor,

Where I disagree with you is the term "obligation for the observance of the Law and the Sabbath."

My understanding of the New Covenant is that "obligation and law" have been replaced with "freedom and love." Numerous times, already cited, along with the texts from Romans you've listed in you last post, we are reminded that in Christ, we are freed from the law -- written and engraved in stones (2 Corinthians 3:6,7) and that through no works of the law shall any flesh be justified (Romans 3: 20). The law of the Old Covenant can do nothing but condemn us to death. It is through Christ's blood sacrifice that I am freed from the penalty of death. I can do NOTHING to EARN my salvation. If that is true, of what value is "obligation" to the law?

As God's law is written in our hearts, we will serve Him out of love and gratitude, not obligation. The purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24-26). Being led by His Spirit, we will walk in His way, not out of legal obligation, but through faith (like that of Abraham) that His way is best.

In Christ, I cannot, again, be bound by the yoke of the law (Galatians 5:1). To do so, in my mind, is to say that what Christ did for me on the Cross is not enough, but that it needs the "help" of my
works (Galatians 2:21). In Christ, the law is not for me, but for the reprobate (1 Timothy 1: 9-15). Indeed, it will be by the law that all whose sins are uncovered by the blood of Christ will be judged -- and convicted. Why would I want any part of THAT?

The Sabbath predates Sinai is as old as this world. I keep it because I love God and the Holy Spirit leads me to believe it is God's good will for me. It also, we believe, has implications for our loyalty to God in the time of the end. Even that loyalty will not last (or, I believe, be acceptable to Him) if based on obligation (works of the law). I need something deeper and stronger than the law to hold me in the time of trouble.

Love, not law, is the strongest force in the universe.

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JaNe 1 day ago

Look to the Sanctuary...There lies the answer. (As SDA's we should all know this).

In the outer court is Justification. In the inner court is Sanctification. And in the Most Holy Place is the Mercy Seat of GOD for the Judgement. Repentance is both asking&recieving forgiveness and changing your ways. Or as Revelation 22:11 puts it- *and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* ...Notice the 2 things mentioned. Those who have passed their Judgement are both Righteous (Justified by the blood of the lamb) and Holy (Sanctified by His Spirit into a changed life).

First comes the GRACE, then as a result of the GRACE comes the LAW. As the Scriptures put it-*If ye love me, keep my commandments.* John 14:15

Or as John explains- *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* Notice, His Commandments are NOT grievous if we love Him.

We keep His LAW as a result of recieving His Grace. The two go hand-in-hand. One (willingly keeping His LAW) is a result of the other (recieving freely His GRACE). This is the test...

*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* Revelation 22:14 ... Now how does one interpret this verse? Are we saved and have a right to the tree of life BECAUSE of commandment keeping? NO-but rather the commandment keeping is a result of getting your heart right with God as a result of Grace. As in the layout in the Sanctuary-Grace first, for there is no other way to be saved, but then the inner court comes next, a changed life.

A glimpse after Grace (1st compartment) into the 2nd & 3rd compartment from Isaiah 55:7-

*Let the wicked forsake his way,*  
*and the unrighteous man his thoughts:*  
*and let him return unto the LORD,*  
*and he will have mercy upon him,*  
*and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*  

Look to His Sanctuary- *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:* Psalm 77:13
Hey, Brother Preston
I appreciate your time with me one this one. I see it more as a difference in perspective with regards to our call to obedience to God IN CHRIST JESUS with love dominating this experience. You are right about God's Love. My perspective is that they (law and love) are both a part of who God is and playing down one over the other isn't really necessary as they (law and love) have distinctive roles in God's plan for all of us.

Rom 13:8 Do not owe anyone anything—except to love one another. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the Law.
Rom 13:9 For the commandments, “You must not commit adultery; you must not murder; you must not steal; you must not covet,” and every other commandment are summed up in this statement: “You must love your neighbor as yourself.”
Rom 13:10 Love never does anything that is harmful to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Law.

In [Lev 19:18] we see the ‘love your neighbour’ which comes as a summary [Rom 13:9] of the six commandments which deals with our fellow man. Note that NO ceremonial laws are mentioned specifically in the verses from [Rom 13:9] but those found in the Ten. Then also we have to consider that the word ‘law’ is the same word used in [Matt 5:18] when Jesus affirmed it, in his ‘heaven or earth will pass…not one jot or tittle’ words, regarding it. In the context of these verses he emphasizes that he has not come to ‘destroy the law’ but to fulfill [Matt 5:17]. In fact in the NT the word ‘law’ νόμος is used for all the ‘law’ references from what I have seen which includes the references Jesus and Paul make when speaking of ‘law’. In [Matt 5:19] Jesus uses the word ‘commandments’ ἐντολή when obviously referring to the Ten. There is a distinction with regards to the Ten Commandments/Law usage in the NT New Deal and the Ceremonial law/Ten Commandments/civil/domestic/health laws Old Covenant combo. Although Paul makes no direct distinction between them, he does mention them separately in [Eph 2:15]: Law, commandments and ordinances. We know that all three references are not made 'void' but only the 'ordinances of handwriting' [Col 2:14] and the 'agreement' of the Old Covenant itself which was abrogated, clauses and all.

Again, I say, It is the ordinances pointing to Christ which was ‘nailed to the cross’ AND our debt as sinners. The only way I see it that the that the Law can itself be ‘nailed to the cross’ is, if Jesus is personified as the Law: which I have no qualms about. When someone is acquitted or found not guilty, the law which charges them still remains ‘the law’ and remains there for all to obey. HOW one is able to obey God IS what makes the difference. Own works? No way! Christ's works? Hip Hip Hooray! In other words, the OC or Old Deal had a Ten Commandment ‘clause’ included in its formulation which, although it predated Sinai, formed part of the legal transaction agreed upon by God and the Israelites at Sinai. The LAW reveals God’s character which is unquestionably dominated by LOVE and can rightfully be called the LAW OF LOVE or LAW OF LIBERTY. It is here perhaps where I would say that we see it in a different ‘perspective’, rather than where we disagree. I see love in the law of God and God’s love for us. WE OBEY because Christ Obeyed - because of Love. Are we saved by it? NAY! Is it the basis of what we are judged by, even for those who bypass the judgement stage of the judgement process by vitue of Christ's merits? YAY!

In [1Thess 4:1-2] he makes request on how we should please and walk with God and of the Commandments giving to them by Jesus. In the following verses Paul then expresses the sentiments of the Ten commandments in referring us our love for God and our love for man. Example – fornication is a sin which offends God [1Thess 4:3]. Then is [1Thess 4:6] he says let no
man defraud his brother. This is in essence what the Ten Commandments express. Bottom line: the Law has NO redemptive attributes for us to be saved. The Cross has and does. Although I might as well add that Jesus obeyed the Law and it is His obedience or keeping of the Law or His 'works' that saves us. This cannot be avoided. It is critical to receiving His Righteousness and been 'declared' NOT GUILTY on His merits of course.

The Law upholds God's Love and Justice and Righteousness. The Cross displays His Love and Justice and Righteousness. When one says: “God is Love”, it would by default include the Law as a part of His Love, which represents His Righteousness and Character. Lastly, we obey God in Christ Jesus and are called to keep the Commandments of God in Christ Jesus [Rev 12:17, Rev 14:12, John 14:15, John 14:21, John 15:10, ]. Note John 14:21 - Is this Love or what?

I will hopefully make another post on how I think we obey in Christ...(aka - imputed and imparted righteousness which actually from my perspective enhances His wonderful LOVE and LAW) ♥T

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Brother Trevor,

This discussion is what I hoped the article would prompt. It is vital that we a re-search the scriptures, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to understand what is intended.

For me it is, now, very straightforward. In the context of Matthew 5:17, Christ said that He came not to destroy, but to fulfill His Father's law. Until that was done, heaven and earth would pass before one jot or tittle would pass from the law (the 10 Commandments). On the cross, Christ declared, "It is finished," meaning the fulfillment of the law -- and the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God. In terms of works, everything necessary for our salvation had been (and is) accomplished. After His resurrection, just prior to His ascension, Christ said to His disciples, that He had done what He came to do: fulfill God's (Old Covenant) law -- which is not voided, providing the payment that law demands ("the ministry of death, written and engraved in stones," 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, Romans 6:23), and, thus, a means of salvation for us (breakers of that law). We are called to keep Christ's commandments (the law of love, John 13:34, Galatians 5:14), to be "in Christ," who kept His Father's commandments on our behalf (John 14:15, John 14:21, John 15:10). Our salvation is by grace, through faith in Christ, who has reconciled us with the Father (2 Corinthians 5:18, Colossians 1:20).

I believe that, in the time of the end -- when the mark of the beast and his image is bestowed on those who worship a false God of tradition, the Sabbath will be an identifier of those who worship the creator God. A difference between the two groups will be those who honor the Sabbath (along with other identifiers such as not bowing down to idols, Exodus 20:4, Daniel 3:8-12), sanctified by the creator God at the close of creation (Genesis 2:1-2), consistent with the first angel's message: “Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him who made the heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters,” Revelation 14:7. At the time of the end, when the mark of the beast is bestowed on false worshippers, true worshippers will be identified, in part, by those who are both in Christ and have chosen loyalty to the Father (Rev 12:17, Rev 14:12).

In short, at the time of the end, those worshipping the creator God are identified by having faith in Christ and keeping the commandments of the Creator (whose law Christ kept perfectly). Our
commandment keeping, at that time, is an *identifier*. However, the *means* of our salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Thanks for listening.

**laffal** 1 day ago

I believe that one of the identifiable problems with the concept of obedience comes from our interpretation of what it means to keep the commandments. We have tended largely to automatically define the term "keep" as "obedience." Why I believe that it is problematic is that, in terms of how God saves the sinner, one's relationship to the His law is everything.

God gave the law in stone for the most part, as a transcript of His character of love / holiness to convict sinners of transgression, and by extension the sense of it's penalty, condemnation. In the design was the purpose of developing a sense / need in the sinner for a Savior... Jesus... who would by God's oath / promise meet all of the demands of the law as the sinner's representative. Any attempt to obey the law (our general understanding of keeping it) for the purpose of obtaining / sustaining / retaining / maintaining our salvation is doomed to fail, and bring us under the ministry of death... the curse of the law.

When the sinner accepts Christ and His righteousness as a free gift, which established the law on our behalf, the law itself comes in the person of the Holy Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, obedience will be as natural as God loving us.

So what's the big deal about "keeping the commandments"? The general concept of the original Hebrew / Greek terms used was in the idea of possession for a purpose: 1) to attend to carefully, take care of 1a) to guard 1b) metaphorically to keep, one in the state in which he is 1c) to observe 1d) to reserve: to undergo something. The 10 Commandments to the redeemed are a safeguard from failure, they illustrate how the redeemed life is to be lived, with the assurance that as we walk in the Spirit the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in them. "Here are they!"

- The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalms 19:7-11 ESV)
- Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble. (Psalms 119:165 ESV)
- For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life; (Proverbs 6:23 JPS)

**You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.**
C.S. Lewis remarked that the French divide all soups into two categories: the thick and the clear. He carried that distinction over into religion. Religions which emphasize the mystical and emotional aspects are thick; those which focus primarily on reason and pietism are clear.

In these terms, the Roman Catholic church of Luther’s day was quite “thick.” Luther experienced this first hand, when he trembled at performing the Mass. The idea that the bread and the wine became the actual body and blood of Christ overwhelmed him. If it were true, it surely would be an electrifying experience—thick soup indeed. The sacramental nature of Catholicism appeals to the human appetite for the mystical and numinous—a God-given appetite to experience His power and presence in a personal way.

In addition, Abbot Suget had provided the intellectual justification for the lavish furnishings and decorations of the churches of his day, adding to an already “thick soup” of religious experience. Beauty in the church: beauty in the art and the architecture and the music would “lift the senses upward to the heavens.” But this reasonable desire for beauty became an end in itself—columns and floors of marble; stained glass windows; decorations with gold and precious stones—eventually practically every inch of wall and ceiling covered with tapestry or paintings. Just as too much thick soup eventually overloads the senses and clogs the arteries, all this decoration overloaded spiritual perception, and fostered a sensuous religion, a sensuous clergy, and a corrupt church.

The Reformation changed all that. Luther was a professor, a creature of the University, so he nailed 95 theses, or debating propositions, to the door of Wittenberg church, hoping to stimulate a serious discussion of issues facing the church in his day. Luther also famously compared Christians to a drunk riding a horse. First the drunk falls off the horse on one side, and then, in an attempt steady himself, leans the other way and so falls off the other side of the horse. No doubt this comparison arose because of what Luther observed at the beginning of what became the Reformation. Luther had written against images, and so, during the “Peasants Revolution,” followers began defacing anything and everything artistic in the church, destroying statues, ripping tapestries, and marring paintings. The gorgeous gilded sanctuaries of the middle ages gave way to the spare lecture hall style churches of Luther and Calvin.

Having started as a debate within the one catholic—that is, “universal”—church, the Reformation quickly devolved into multiple arguments about finer and finer points of doctrine among an ever-multiplying number of denominations. The numinous and mystical experiences of a sacramental Catholicism were scorned, leaving congregations with highly abstract discussions of doctrinal and theological interest—thin soup, indeed. The clear soup of cognitive religion is nourishing, but not fully satisfying. And it is no advance to replace the corruption of the sensuous church with the arrogance and self-righteousness of the intellectual church.

When it comes to our religious experience, we need both the thick and the clear. Experiencing the overwhelming power, majesty, and beauty of God is an antidote to the self-righteousness and self-sufficiency of the intellectual church. And a call to holiness based on an intellectual understanding of the Gospel serves as a curb on sensuality and corruption. We need both the thick and the clear. To change the metaphor, we need to stop falling off the horse, and regain a balanced...
position.

The charismatic movement arose, at least in part to feed the need for thick religious soup, for the mystical and numinous, for sensuous elements of worship, among Protestants whose religious soup had been too thin for too long.

Early Adventists had a “thicker” soup. After all, if a person suddenly goes into vision and ceases to breathe during a service, that rates pretty high on the “thickness” scale. Early Adventists went from a movement expecting the return of Christ at a date certain—a “thick” experience if there ever was one—to an environment in which competing visions, outbreaks of speaking in tongues, and other spiritual phenomena abounded. Even before that, Ellen Harmon had grown up as a “Shouting Methodist.”

Through the years Adventism has become highly cognitive and therefore very thin soup. This can be seen in both our appetite for and cynicism concerning new visions and other phenomena. In the NAC (Not an Adventist Center) areas, we have an uneasy truce with the arts. Visual art and music we allow, with varying restrictions. Even the mention of drama and dance will probably earn me another couple of web pages denouncing such “Satanic” influences.

At least part of the remedy is to make our soup thicker. We need to embrace all the arts, including the so-called lively arts. We need to integrate them into our services. We need to welcome change. The default in most of our churches is “No.”

The former pastor at one of our college churches told me of his six-month struggle to get the church board to approve removing one pew for one week so the college orchestra could participate in the church service. “You would have thought an angel from heaven came and instructed them to bolt the pew exactly there!” he said to me. That’s a church where the default is “No.” Unless we can find some direct authorization for something in scripture or Ellen White, the answer is “No.” There is one notable exception, where despite a direct command from God, we still say no (see Ps. 149, 150).

At our church plant, the default is “Yes.” Unless there is some obvious reason not to try something, then we let people experiment. Out of scores of new ideas, there is only one we rejected. And we have integrated the lively arts as much as budget, time, and personnel allow.

“But wait!” many will say. “That sounds very risky to me. Very dangerous.”

Dangerous? What most congregations are currently doing isn’t dangerous. Dangerous indicates an element of risk. What most congregations are currently doing isn’t risky, it’s suicidal. A recent study indicates that fully one fifth of our congregations have no infants, children or teenagers. None. We’ve been hemorrhaging energy, talent, and even money for decades. And it’s our own blood. Our own children, our own brothers and sisters, even our own grandchildren. How many generations must we lose before we recognize that not to embrace change, not to engage the whole person, not to satisfy every God-given appetite is deadly?

“Oh, but today’s young adults are spiritually weak,” many say to me. “They yield to temptation.” Of course they do. Again, from C.S. Lewis, “The tempter always works on some real weakness in our system of values: offers food to some need we have starved.”

If we starve our young, we can hardly condemn them for finding food elsewhere. And evidence abounds that our young are starving. While we fantasize about evangelizing the world, we cannot spiritually feed the children we have. Perhaps we need to remember that the final message really is
about “Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children.”

**Timo Onjukka**

Great analogy! Spare the gruel; we ought share the meat!  
Perhaps the meat of the gospel has been too-oft diluted into some artificial protein analog.
The real sustenance; "Peter do you LOVE me? Then NOURISH my people..."

**William Noel**

Change is threatening, not because it is dangerous, but because our fear of danger itself causes us to see it where it does not exist and overlook the real and present potential for positive result. If we do not allow our churches to change so that all members can be fed, with particular focus on our children, then we have created the real danger of our churches dying.

**Elaine Nelson**

Much as I love the great organ, choir and orchestra for church, how many churches are you familiar with that are able to afford those amenities?  Only the very few large churches at SDA institutions. I know of only one (there may be others) non-institutional churches who have these musical aids to worship. Can you name others?

**Timo Onjukka**

repost by columns editor, edited gratuitous non-germane reference.

**DAVID READ**

"Excellent piece. One note of caution: thickening the soup doesn't require a dumbed down liturgy. Just the opposite is true. If you want to borrow something from the Catholics, borrow the great organ, choir and orchestral music. Larding up the service with insipid "praise music" in the hope that it will keep the young people interested is not the way forward. You end up torturing the older people, and the younger people (removed line) see through the craven attempt to appease them."

**Kevin Riley**

Interesting POV. But in my church it was those who are now in their 60's and 70's who led the move to a contemporary service about 20 years ago. We still have a traditional service as well, but most weeks no one plays the organ because no one learns how to any more. How using a piano, or a group of musicians, rather than an organ 'dumbs down the liturgy' is beyond my comprehension. Is there evidence that organs somehow increase the effectiveness of worship, or that worshippers somehow become smarter or more spiritual from listening to an organ? It is the failure to take worship seriously, often indicated by the huddle 10 minutes before the service
starts to work out who should do what, that leads to dumbing down the liturgy. Music style and
the Bible version used - even the actual order of service - are so peripheral to any real issue in
worship that we really should move on and talk about something that matters.

William Noel
1 week ago

Kevin,

If you study the use of various musical instruments throughout history you will find many
curious parallels between the musical preferences of the ruling class and social concepts. I
have to smile whenever I hear someone proclaiming that one instrument or another is more
acceptable for worshipping God because of the history of instruments. What we know as the
organ originated from people blowing disharmonic reeds to ward off evil spirits. The
harpsichord and piano were first used to accompany the dances in the royal courts of Prussia
and Austria.

Horace Butler
1 week ago

Innovation has been going on in our churches for several decades now, and, rather than improving
the spiritual state of the church, the opposite seems to be the case. Young people are still leaving.
They aren't stupid. If the church is offering them the same kinds of music and gimmicks that the
world offers, why should they stay? The church has to provide something better than the world. I
don't think the lack of "lively arts" is the problem, nor do I think we should be borrowing from the
charismatic movement, which derives much of its "soup" from paganism. Aaron tried to liven
things up a bit with his "alternative" worship service at the foot of Sinai. I think the death toll was
several thousand. We need to have open minds, but not so much that our brains fall out. Skip the
soup; let's have some meat, as Paul said.

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago

Paul said he would be all things to all men in order to win some to Christ. Why should there be
limitations on presenting the Gospel if Paul felt he shouldn't be constrained?
He also said that everyone could not handle meat, but milk for some.

The criticism of paganism is not realistic. So much of worship, even in Judaism was first practiced
by pagans; and the same today. It is only "baptized" and then labeled "Christian" and become
appropriate. "Paganism" is everything that is not from Judeo-Christianity, and is a catch-all term
that means only what the user means it to be.

David Read
1 week ago

My description of much contemporary Christian music was certainly germane, if perhaps too
graphic.

Timo Onjukka
1 week ago
To dehydrate the soup, freeze-dry it, package it in neat little plastic acetic and salt-free (emblazoned with "Old-time Original Grandmas Soup" and a catchy nostalgic lyric) is to seize "music" as the enemy.

Music is perhaps a symptom, mere barometer, the canary gasping in the coal pit. That this thread immediately clung to one of these concretions, non-nutritive clinkers in the stone soup we call our church perhaps not not surprising at all. Salacious allusions, immediate labels, tired denials ready trotted out...not surprising either. Nowhere in the OT is there any mention of such topical constriction.

The mutual admiration society neatly rearranging the Titanics deck chairs, arguing about the music, and congratulating each other on their tidy ballroom and orderly pageantry...should we perhaps worry less why we struck the iceberg, admit we are all doomed, and man the lifeboats?

Ellen White clearly writes that it will appear as if "the church HAS failed" (missional, not organizational).

This thread grants small peek into the failure. Too quick with reasons the failures are someone elses, or denying even that an empty church void of a real-life love might even be able to fail (after all, look at all we DO). When everyone is in the deadly water, will God go around checking each iPod, to determine who is saved on basis of their music? What has happened to my church?

Ed, thank you again. Radical love....

The prodigal father, profligate lover, loved both.

One accepted the invitation to the wedding feast, and danced with daddy.

The other? Father is waiting at the end of the driveway, robe in hand, for the elder, too.

For a time longer...and then the midnite call.

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**Kermit Netteburg** 1 week ago

I'm fascinated at the study that showed 20% of Adventist congregations have no infants, children, or teenagers. I'd love to know if that data was correlated with the size of the church, and the "metropolitan-ness" of the location of the church. My guess would be that most of those churches would be in rural, smaller towns - where the general population includes very few infants, children, and teenagers. I fear we overestimate the "gray-ness" of Adventism when we say the average age of Adventists is 50s or 60s, and the average age of Americans is 20s or 30s. We don't include the children of the church in the Adventist average age, but we do include the children of the country. We in essence compare apples with oranges - or perhaps raisins with grapes!

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**Kevin Riley** 1 week ago

I can't speak for anywhere else, but in Australia there are churches in country towns where there are no children or teens in the church, but the town is building more schools. Many churches are dying even in towns where the population is growing or steady. The loss of young people is also a problem for some city churches. I know of one 'ethnic' church that, after much anguish, changed the language of worship from their 'home' language to English to keep their children and grandchildren. So far they seem to have been successful. Other churches refuse to change the way they do anything, hoping their children will become 'spiritual' enough to see they are right. Most churches with no children or teens are small churches, perhaps because the things that
persuade the young people that it is not worth staying have the same effect on adults as well.

Gailon Arthur Joy

Pardon my cynicism or not, but when one opens with CS Lewis and ends with CS Lewis and not an ounce of “thus saith the Lord” in the entire article is suspect and the party writing the same of suspect theological grounding. CS Lewis is the epitome of hypocrisy virtually living in sin a large part of his theological life and admittedly struggled with this open failure to overcome this open sin.

I have seen no evidence that CS Lewis is worthy of sound theological judgment or worthy of quotation by any Seventh-day Adventist pastor or emulation by any SDA congregation.

Does the author not recognize the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Laodicean? And has he missed the cure? Read it and then preach it and maybe, just maybe, we will see a return to primitive Godliness. That is the real “soup” and is neither French nor British, but simply fundamental Christianity.

Every person makes choices that leads either to obedience or rebellion and the real “soup” is simply submission to the spirit and obedience to God’s calling in every aspect of life. I would submit that some are “thin” and some are “thick” depending upon the stage in their individual Christian experience. In Laodicea that is simply defined as “hot” and “cold” and lukewarm is spewn out.

And let me clarify that CS Lewis is nothing but warm water and should have been spewn out a long time ago!!! Particularly by our theologians.

G Arthur Joy

Elaine Nelson

Every Christian church known claims "thus saith the Lord." The Bible can, and has been used to support slavery, women's subordination, killing, polygamy, and more. Should we quote the Bible today as has been done to support such things? Is it just possible that the interpretation of the Bible that is so vastly different?

Trevor Hammond

RE: This comment by Mrs. Nelson: "The Bible can, and has been used to support slavery, women's subordination, killing, polygamy, and more."

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I would prefer it been said this way: "The Bible can, and has been ERRONEOUSLY used AND UNFAIRLY ACCUSED OF PURPORTING to support slavery, women's subordination, killing, polygamy, and more. (emphasis mine)
Horace Butler 1 week ago

So, Elaine, you're blaming the Bible for murder, slavery, and polygamy? Could it be that the fault lies with fallen man and his perverseness, rather than with Scripture? It was the principles of the gospel, properly understood, that finally ended slavery and polygamy in most places. By the way, slavery and polygamy predated the Bible. If mankind wasn't so degraded, the principles in the Bible would have ended these institutions much earlier.

During WWII the Constitution was manipulated to allow for the illegal incarceration of loyal Japanese Americans, but the fault wasn't with the Constitution; it was with wild-eyed fear mongers who saw a traitor behind every Japanese face.

Timo Onjukka 1 week ago

Perhaps the cynical cannot pardon, hence may themselves be unpardoned. I suppose we each can then be glad we are not like C S Lewis, and have no (or perhaps less open sins).

Apparently, in our unpardoning state, we are clearly neither lukewarm, nor hot. "I thank you God you did not make me a Catholic, or an atheist. Or living in (open) sin with a woman"

Another respondent forgot to mention that the bible is (perhaps less purportedly) also used to support that OTHER fatal sin (as opposed to murder and polygamy)-namely, a prideful and arrogant self-righteousness.

DO we see the irony behind the final of the above three posters? "(the bible is) manipulated to allow for the (rejection) of (other lost sinners) but the fault (isn't) with the (bible); it is with wild-eyed fear mongers who see a (Jesuit or a sinner et al) behind every (non-SDA) face."

Finally, the certitude in telling us why slavery or polygamy were not "ended much earlier" errs grossly in that we still have, effectively, servitude, even in America, and "functional polygamy" certainly within our own church.

In the historic lens, we have only a little over a century of legislating free moral agency, not much longer than our total church history.

Perhaps the Bible is more concerned with the overarching broader principle of slavery in its broadest application, namely slavery to sin, and its consequent law and polygamy in the sense of "zanah". This is not to diminish the evil of slavery or polygamy, however it expresses itself in any particular age.

On a related note, it is interesting how Jesus first evangelic commission was to a woman (who, perhaps not coincidentally, was practising her own form of "serial polygamy"). Is there a difference between subordination of women, and denial of ordination?

I pray we all realize we are each unprofitable slaves (certainly irrespective gender/race/title/status/role etc), like Onesimus; thieving orphans stealing from our master, sent back to our chains and Philemon, for a time. There is one who has preached freedom, taught forgiveness, and brought healing....but for a time we are yet bound on earth.
When Elaine said, "The Bible can, and has been used to support slavery, women's subordination, killing, polygamy, and more." I certainly didn't take that as her blaming the Bible for such. There appears to be some who comment on these blogs who read something Elaine contributes, and automatically conclude the worst. I'll admit that she can be provocative a times, but some of the things Jesus said were too.

Yes, the Bible can and has been used (erroneously) for all kinds of strange things. Chain linking texts together to suit your own prejudice can lead to just about anything, with the perpetrator of such standing firmly on a "thus says the Lord" while they are doing it. Even SDA's have not been immune from that.

The Bible is even being used today in Adventism to deny women's ordination. The "here a little, there a little" lumping of texts together to prove a position is the way many of us were taught Bible doctrines. It seems that it is still practiced.

I realize that the topic is not WO, but I don't know how one can understand the Bible any other way--unless one uses the historical critical method of interpretation to accuse Peter and Paul of being "culturally conditioned," which automatically accuses the Holy Spirit of having the same mentality. This is the same method that allows skeptics to throw out the most logical understanding of Gen. 1-11, so as to allow the evolutionary fairy tale to be promulgated within the church. Oh what a tangled web we weave . . . .

The historical critical interpretation is essential if one is to understand much of scripture. It was neither written in a vacuum or prescient into the future. All people live within their culture and time and space. To suggest otherwise is to give everything ever written as having equal importance.

The Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost because there was receptivity; the Holy Spirit spoke to Saul on the way to Damascus. Would he have been receptive a few years earlier? As a child? The Holy Spirit does not operate willy-nilly but at the appropriate time and place. What may have been appropriate for an earlier time should not be considered equally valid for all time. People wrote the Bible and lived within the boundaries of their perceptions.

Spoken like a true believer in "higher criticism." Have mercy!
Elaine Nelson

What is "lower criticism"? If you don't interpret the Bible, you are one in a million. Everyone sees it through their own set of glasses. Isn't context part of "higher criticism"?
What is your rubric?

Horace Butler

Higher criticism="historical/critical method," as opposed to the historical grammatical method--which includes context as a very important element. The latter method was the one used by the reformers and, until recently, by most SDA's. The former method is what has led to so many far out interpretations of the Bible--such as the idea that Genesis 1-11 is merely allegorical. Maybe the decalogue is, too, and I can keep the "spirit" of the law and ignore the letter--since Paul (who was merely a product of his times) says that the letter kills. Using the HC method of interpretation I can make the Bible mean whatever I want it to mean.

Tom

Lower criticism? Hmm. Could that mean rebuttals that are sort of hit below the belt? I tend to look at the general theme of the Bible, and the reason something is stated as it is within it, the times it was written as well as context and see how it should be applied in a contemporary sense. "Line upon line, precept upon precept" should be the byword when searching the Scriptures for answers to today's issues. Times change, but principles remain the same. It was never in God's plan that there be slavery, polygamy, or that women be subjugated by men. The men were to be the key authority figure in the household, yet exercise it as to the Lord, not be a slavemaster over her. Just because our society has everything upside down these days is no reason to turn the Bible on it's head and disregard what is clearly meant both in word and principle. We are not to follow a neutered version of the Word.

Jan

"When it comes to our religious experience, we need both the thick and the clear. Experiencing the overwhelming power, majesty, and beauty of God is an antidote to the self-righteousness and self-sufficiency of the intellectual church." By Ed Dickerson

The last time I was flying, was to attend my Aunt's funeral. Travel necessitated that the flight was arriving into Florida, as the sun was going down, Friday night... For at least an hour, I could see the ravishing, dark reds and purples, oranges and pinks, deeply displayed as God put one long, slow stroke at a time on His magnificent display of passion, love and art into the sky... I was taken aback, stunned, stilled, smalled into the realization that this God is amazing, He is brilliant, He is loving, He is lavish ... even at the beginning of His Sabbath, He is painting. My, oh my. Who am I, that He is mindful of me? My children are not attending church ... but they are attending God. They are daily talking, praying and leading others to Him. Somewhere in the Bible, it says that if we do not tell of His love, the rocks and the mountains will cry out ... The rocks and the mountains, the skies and the seas ... God uses whatever it takes, to reach to our children. Oh, that I would be the kind of person He could use, to reach my children... but I know that He does not need me to do this, because He is doing it, inspite of me.
Horace and Tom,

It is easy to get lost in discussions about "higher" and "lower" criticism and lose sight of the fact that there is very little direct instruction in scripture. The majority of the Bible is telling the stories of people in their relationship with a loving God. Likewise, the primary basis for my faith is not my adherence to specific and detailed instruction from God, but my relationship with Him that empowers me to become victorious in my battle with sin and to share His love with others. Along the way I discover from time to time that the old temptations that used to ensnare me no longer have the same power over me that they once did because I've been focused on living in God's love and He has been transforming me.

Jan,

Thank you for sharing that scene. It is so refreshing to be reminded that, no matter what railures and troubles surround us, God is still God and worthy of our praise.