**NEWS**

**General Conference Officers Respond to Columbia Union Conference Constituency Meeting:** The General Conference has issued a letter to the Columbia Union Conference, voicing disappointment in its decision to allow ordination of women in its territory. The rapid response seems intended to help set the stage for a similar Session to be held August 19 by the Pacific Union Conference....

**Understanding the Claims and Counter Claims about Unity and Authority in the Adventist Church:** Adventist history is rife with pushing and shoving on matters of central "kingly" authority, unity, and self-determination. The years leading up to the General Conference Session of 1901 and Ellen White's post-Australia counsel can cast light on the women's ordination issue today....

**Adventist Small Business Group, ASI Annual Convention Convenes This Week in Cincinnati:** One of the church's most upbeat, enterprising, and evangelistic-minded associations of lay Adventists is meeting once again to set its plans and goals for world outreach and ministry....

**Newsweek Declares Pacific Union College Most Beautiful College Campus in America:** The hillside campus of Pacific Union College overlooking the world-famous Napa Valley has been named the most beautiful college campus in the United States—a distinction that also takes into account the local climate and friendliness of the students....

**OPINION**

**Voluntary Unity in Christ or Forced Unity by Dictation?** "Serious Consequences" have been promised, coming in October, for those who break stride with the General Conference on ordination of women as pastors. Looking ahead to the Pacific Union Conference Session, August 19, Blogger Ervin Taylor wonder if this is the best way to ensure unity....[A previous blog on this topic appeared earlier this week](Click here for earlier blog).

**What Did Happen in 1881?:** Minutes of the 1881 General Conference Session specifically mention an item calling for the ordination of women. But what happened to it, and why are there several versions of the minutes of that meeting? Blogger Monte Sahlin dons his deerstalker cap, and finds things anything but elementary....

**Remember the Sabbath Day:** Young blogger Charles Eaton ponders what it means to keep the Sabbath—and, among other questions, whether we should engage in Sabbath sex. More questions than answers, until Eaton views Sabbath as a relationship-builder....
**About the Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry:** Eric C. Webster writes a thoughtful, comprehensive summary of reasons why he, as a retired, ordained minister/administrator in South Africa, believes the time is ripe to end the restriction against ordaining women....

**Jesus, [Only] The Friend Of Sinners:** Columnist Don Watson tells us that before we can truly love Jesus, our eyes must be opened to the desperate nature of the sin in our nature. Jesus often solved that problem by granting eyesalve—healing the blindness—of those he called. Only when we can see our own desperate needs can we begin to love Jesus, as He so loves the world....

**Whistleblower, Part 4:** The story of AHS and the whistleblower who claims a cover-up of problems with patient records' protocols, continues with a carefully summarized release of AHS's position in the ongoing struggle....

**Worn Out:** God knows when we've had enough—when, like Elijah of old, the Mt. Carmels of life have nearly overwhelmed us and we pray, "Just let me die." God answered Elijah's prayer with something far better than death—an out-of-this-world retirement plan. A devotional thought by Debbonaire Kovacs....

**SUBSCRIBERS' BONUS FEATURE**

**Collegedale—The Quintessential Adventist Small Town is Now One of the Fastest Growing Suburbs in the State:** For decades the town of Collegedale, Tennessee, has provided a dedicated enclave for students, faculty, and staff of Southern Adventist University and Adventist lay-owned McKee Foods. Now the world has taken note and the town's small-town, sober ways are changing..... (Accessible by subscribers only)

**Pastor Uses Unusual Musical Instruments to Reconnect Hearts to the Creator:** Music played by Pastor Mark "Wandering Bear" Barger on primitive and unusual instruments forms the mainstay of a ministry that reaches all faiths and cultures with the gospel.... (Accessible by subscribers only)

**A Weekly Newsletter from atoday.org**

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General Conference Officers Respond to Columbia Union Conference C...

The officers of the General Conference (GC) have issued a statement this week labeling the vote of the Columbia Union Conference constituency session on July 29 to ordain women pastors “a serious threat to the unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church” and “very disappointing to the senior leaders of the worldwide church.” GC President Ted Wilson appeared at the session and appealed to the delegates not to take the action which later in the day more than 80 percent voted. It was the second time this year that a union conference constituency has voted to extend ordination to women, a step which the Adventist Church in China took in the 1980s.

The statement is similar to a letter circulated in advance of the July 29 meeting and again appeals to union conferences around the world to wait until the GC completes a study of ordination which was announced by Wilson at the 2010 GC Session. It does go further in stating specifically that the action voted by the Columbia Union delegates is “not in harmony with General Conference Working Policy.” This is a controversial position because many church historians and experts on denominational policy have pointed out that the Working Policy does assign the approval of ordinations to union conferences and does not include a specific policy prohibiting the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

The primary reason for this statement is likely not to re-state what the GC officers have said earlier. It is aimed at the Pacific Union Conference constituency delegates that will assemble August 19 to consider the same issue. It is likely that this statement is an attempt by the GC officers to convince the delegates in the Pacific Union Conference to vote against the ordination of women.

“The real issue here is the exercise of leadership,” one retired denominational administrator told Adventist Today. “The GC leaders have muddled through this issue for decades and everyone is losing patience.” A retired missionary said, “the concern is that in some parts of Africa and Latin America there will be a significant number of members leaving the Adventist Church if women are ordained. If that were to happen, the growth of the church in some areas could be slowed down.”

The GC Session of 1881 voted a resolution permitting the ordination of women, but it was never implemented for reasons that remain unclear. In the 1950s the issue was again discussed by the GC leadership which led to a number of studies similar to the current one and an indecisive vote at the 1990 GC Session which declared that there was no reason in Scripture or the writings of Ellen White to prohibit the practice and decided not to move ahead with it because of concerns about “unity.”

The statement in full is as follows:

“The unity among disciples for which Jesus prayed is a precious gift of God: this gift must be continually nurtured and is a never-ending and often difficult task of those gathered in His name. Thus the apostolic church could engage in vigorous discussion and even robust disagreement with the assurance that each member’s personal surrender to the Spirit would result in a God-honoring resolution to the challenges and conflicts so that the essential unity of the church was preserved and extended (Acts 15:1-29). Disagreement in such a community of faith is neither fatal nor schismatic, for each believer accepts the responsibility to fulfill the prayer of Jesus by acting and speaking to preserve the unity He expected as indicated in John 17.

“Unilateralism—the premise that one individual or one group may pursue its vision of truth at the expense of the unity of the whole—was and is the great adversary of the unified Body of Christ. It ruptures the essential bond which brings

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people from everywhere into the remnant church, tempting them to prefer one truth above the higher and collective requirement to act in concert with each other.

"Appealing for a serious recommitment to the principle of church unity, the officers of the General Conference and the division presidents issued a call for restraint in their consensus statement of June 29, 2012, ‘An Appeal for Unity in Respect to Ministerial Ordination Practices’. Fully aware that significant differences exist regarding the theology of ordination and the appropriateness of ordaining women to the gospel ministry, they nonetheless urged all entities and individuals in the church to respect current Church policy and General Conference Session decisions, and to work harmoniously through the process established by the General Conference Executive Committee in October 2011. That action established a worldwide three-year study and discussion process culminating with a Theology of Ordination Study Committee which will review all aspects of the practice of ministerial ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church including the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, with reports provided to the October 2014 Annual Council meeting of the Executive Committee. This would allow any agreed-upon resolutions to be placed on the agenda of the 2015 General Conference Session, the body accepted by church entities and affirmed by the divinely-inspired counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy to be the official voice and the highest ecclesiastical authority of the church. The General Conference Executive Committee, through the Colobnia Union Conference between General Conference Sessions, includes nearly 120 union conference and union mission presidents as voting delegates, along with elected officers, departmental directors, pastors, frontline employees and numerous laypersons.

"It was thus very disappointing to the senior leaders of the worldwide church to learn of the unilateral action taken by the delegates of the Columbia Union Conference at a special constituency meeting on July 29, 2012. That action is not in harmony with General Conference Working Policy—the collective decisions of world leadership that define the operating procedures and relationships applicable to all organizations. Further, the action sets aside the 1990 and 1995 decisions of the General Conference in Session respecting the practice of ordination. It pre-empts the process voted by the General Conference Executive Committee for the current study of ordination theology and practices by committing the Columbia Union Conference to a particular outcome before the study-and-discussion process is completed. In so doing, it asserts the right of one entity to place its conclusions above the principle of unity in the Body of Christ. By this action, the delegates have allowed for a principle of unilateralism and autonomy throughout their territory that can only be disruptive to the harmonious functioning of the Columbia Union Conference, as well as to that union’s relationship with the world church family. Unfortunately, some conferences, congregations, and individuals may try now to incorrectly cite the example of the Columbia Union Conference itself as justification for pursuing any independent course of action. It is possible that some who voted for the resolution on July 29 may not have fully understood the danger their action poses to the functional unity of their own region and to the wider denomination.

"The action taken by the Columbia Union Conference represents a serious threat to the unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church, and thus, at its next meeting in October 2012, the General Conference Executive Committee will carefully review the situation and determine how to respond. In the Spirit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the officers of the General Conference and the division presidents again appeal to all entities, organizations, and individuals, including the Columbia Union Conference, to refrain from independent and unilateral decisions and implementing actions on issues affecting ministerial ordination, and to invest their energies and creativity in fostering a vigorous dialogue through the established process about how the Church should recognize and affirm the gifts of the Spirit in the lives and ministry of believers.

"An important companion document, organized as a series of questions and answers about key assumptions, assertions and historical backgrounds discussed at the recent Columbia Union Conference constituency meeting or in related communication, will be available approximately Wednesday, August 8, through the media outlets of the General Conference."

Share your thoughts about this article:
96 comments

Bea
Reply
4 days ago

Sorry, I am having trouble keeping my blood pressure in the normal range. My children are 6th generation SDA’s so the roots are about as deep as the beginning of the SDA church in New England. That being said, patience of the constituency goes all the way back to 1881 - 131 years ago. That is many many GC Sessions or Union Meetings ago. In fact, how many GC presidents ago?

But then, President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in 1865 and a hundred years later we as a people were in the throws of the Civil Rights Movement. To this day, issues remain.

The body of the church cast their vote in the CUC and I believe PUC will cast their vote for WO .

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

The more I read, the more I believe it is likely that in 2015 the GC will vote a position on ordination that will essentially conform our historic understanding, but also make it impossible for women to be ordained as pastors.

Much of this discussion assumes that women working as pastors (and in local churches as elders) is not under dispute, but that misses the fact that many people in Africa, and significant numbers elsewhere, who are committed to a ‘literal’ reading of Scripture, do not believe that women can hold those positions. I would not be surprised, should it go to a vote in 2015, to see the right of women to be ordained to any position removed from GC policy. Then any move to ordain women would clearly be rebellion against the church.

Kevin Riley
"conform" in line 2 would read better as "conform to" or "confirm" - both thoughts were in my head as I wrote.

Stephen Ferguson

...it is likely that in 2015 the GC will vote a position on ordination that will essentially conform our historic understanding, but also make it impossible for women to be ordained as pastors.

And what if some Unions have already been doing it in the interim, and have ordained all their female ministers by then. Do you think their ordinations will be somehow revoked? Do you think there might be some cat and mouse game for this exact reason, where the Unions race ahead and do it, knowing it will be hard to put the rabbit back in the hat?

Kevin Riley

If I were Union President, I'd be tempted. I believe they have at least the letter of the law [policy] on their side right now. A GC session, or even an Autumn Council, could 'clarify' the position on ordination in such a way that ordaining women would become against policy, which would make proceeding impossible. The more Unions who have voted to ordain women, the less likely it is that the GC would take such action. It is not a small matter to vote against GC advice, but it is a much larger matter to over-ride the vote of a union session. I doubt we will see schism if PUC, or even more unions, vote to ordain women. I do believe we would at least see open rebellion in a number of Divisions should the GC decide to prevent the ordination of women in those unions who have voted for it. Had the GC really wanted to fight on this issue, it should have taken on NGUC, as that would have had far less fallout than taking on a number of NAD unions. To maintain unity I believe the GC will either have to accept the session votes while giving iron-clad guarantees that the GC will not allow the decision to be imposed in other parts of the world, or persuade the sessions or union executive committees to rescind their own vote voluntarily (even if reluctantly) as they did with NAD over the move to allow commissioned pastors to become presidents.

Bob Pickle

"The GC Session of 1881 voted a resolution permitting the ordination of women, but it was never implemented for reasons that remain unclear."

At this point I think the average reader may conclude that the AToday News Team is intentionally trying to deceive the public since there is absolutely zero evidence that any such resolution was voted at the 1881 GC Session. I pointed this out to J. David Newman after the CUC ad hoc committee report. He checked it out and agreed, and requested the chairman of that committee to correct their report to reflect the fact that the resolution was proposed but not voted.

It's not like the facts haven't already been dissected to the nth degree. See http://www.atoday.org/article/1326/blogs/sahlin-monte/what-did-happen-in-1881 where a blogger asserted that the resolution was voted based on some undisclosed ST article, with comments beneath that prove that the RH report was the official report, and that both the ST and RH reports clearly marked adopted resolutions as adopted. The resolution on WO was the only one of about 40 not marked adopted. Therefore, that resolution was never voted, and thus WO proponents have once again tried to support their cause with misinformation.

Kevin Riley

It is also true that neither side knows what did happen with the resolution after it was referred to the committee. And I really doubt that had the resution been voted on and the vote was 'yes' or 'no' that either side would see it as decisive to decide the issue today. The acknowledgement that the GC did not vote 'yes' is also an acknowledgement that it did not vote 'no'. All it really shows is how long it can take the GC to come to a decision, or to clearly state the GC is not the right place to make the decision.

Bob Pickle

Regardless, it is wrong and inexcusable to continue claiming that the 1881 resolution was voted when it has already been proven that it was not.

Karl Wagner

While it is true that the 1881 GC did not vote on it (I caught that right away), the good news today is that "we can" vote on it, and like those in the CUC, many of us here in the Pacific Union are looking forward to the opportunity to support ordination without regard to gender. I also do not have much faith that a study called for by the GC on ordination would have ever been done and is now only being used as a smoke screen. I know how cynical that sounds, but let's fact it, we are but clay and we have history to support the lack of movement by the GC regarding this issue for a number of decades.

Elaine Nelson
That any church is so indecisive on a doctrinal position to “continue to study” it for dozens of years, is indicative of a simple and clear plan never to arrive at a decision and “go with the flow” of the world church--take the easy way.

It takes no backbone unlike Martin Luther King demonstrated, to simply postpone a decision on equality. We should not have to wait until the invertebrates can reach a conclusion that has not been possible for these many years.

It's like a boy asking his father to take the family car for a drive and the father defers "I've got to think about it." No decision is deciding against. If the same child requested every year and met the same response, why should he continue to ask, knowing the answer already?

This is the position of women: they have been treated as dependent children; unable to fully use their talents based solely on their xx chromosome. Hoping to seek a definitive answer from the Bible is searching for what is not there. Always deferring to the Bible for answers excuses men from deliberating with their own reasoning power. The desire is to find that elusive text that reads: “Thus saith the Lord, women should not be ordained.” Simple questions are answered by very complicated excuses.

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Elaine Nelson

Elaine: Your comment regarding the GC position to “continue to study” it for dozens of years, is indicative of a simple and clear plan never to arrive at a decision to “go with the flow”...take the easy way - seems to have worked as a strategy in the past. Example: GC vs. David Dennis (six years and millions of tithe dollars later). DD ran out of funds and dropped out. It worked. The GC strategy to delay, delay, delay worked. Since we agree this is not Biblical, I wonder how much longer this is going to be an acceptable way of the GC doing church business. Will we passively accept this as being the Lord's will? What message does this give to our daughters or our sons' attitude toward women?

Elaine Nelson

This is the time the leaders should be called on it: when the PUC votes as did CUC, they will be confronted with the true sentiment of major unions, and there WILL be some that follow these trends. You can count on it. The ball will be in their court!

William Noel

Those poor babies at the General Conference! Listen to them whine when the membership stands-up and decides an issue instead of studying it to eternity. Their whining is only going to make things worse. They need to wake up and discover that the Holy Spirit is moving to empower all believers, including women, for ministry in a variety of ways they've never considered.

Dwayne Turner

For those alleging the the GC has been indecisive about WO... its so convenient to overlook facts...but the truth is GC Presidents, coming after Neil Wilson, have wanted to pass WO, only to see that the World Body is not in favor of it...by Vote or by Sentiment.... hence they have undoubtedly sought to "table it" so they can "kick the can down the road", in hopes that a day will come that there will be a favorable response..... Jan Paulsen was, without question, in favor of WO, and after polling the Division Presidents before the 2010 GC, he decided not to expose the WO cause to another "NO Vote"...
My prayer is that there will be a resounding response by the GC to this current rebellion, and that the suspicions of Kevin Riley will come to fruition.....that there will be a repeal of the ordination of women to any position in the church. Also, that there will be a repudiation of Women serving as Elders as well.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
3 days ago

Amen!

Kevin Riley
Reply
3 days ago

There has always been a reluctance within the church - especially at higher levels - to vote down anything previously voted, as it looks far too much like saying 'we were wrong', so I doubt even those who oppose women's ordination would want to put women working as elders (and now deacons) on the agenda. I am not sure a move to do so could be resisted by the GC if it were pressed by a number of Divisions. This is where it would depend on where European and Asian Divisions came down. Would EAD vote to prevent women working as elders and pastors when some of their unions have moved that way already? Would South America and Inter-America vote for the status quo? I think in this situation, should it arise, many leaders would see the wisdom of allowing unions to make these decisions if the Division allows it, just as we did with having women as elders. I suspect many former GC presidents - no matter what their personal beliefs - may now be wishing that 'can' had not been kicked so long.

olive hemmings
Reply
about 19 hours ago

I wonder if you would have these exact sentiments were you a woman. Ever seriously though about it? Or probably like the Jewish clergy of old you wake up thanking God you are not a woman or a Gentile (non-SDA)? Ah my friend, go to God in prayer...earnest prayer.

Nathan Schilt
Reply
3 days ago

"Unilateralism - the premise that one individual or one group may pursue its vision of the truth at the expense of the unity of the whole - was and is the great adversary of the unified body of Christ."

This is arrant nonsense! "Senior leaders" of the worldwide church delude themselves, and do the church a disservice, by making a truth issue out of gender-based distinctions in the sacrament of ordination. Any world-wide organization sets itself up for disunity and failure when it forces its culturally diverse components into the Procrustean bed of a dominant theological or cultural outlook. The hallmark of successful global organizations is that they adapt to the various cultures in which they wish to thrive.

I see the issue somewhat differently from Elaine, who argues that it takes no backbone for Church leaders at the G.C. level to maintain the status quo. Stubborn resistance to change does take backbone. Church "leadership" has exhibited backbone by stubbornly waiting for a consensus to emerge which isn't on the horizon. Backbone alone isn't what is needed now. What is needed is leadership. The Church is like a fleet of ships (divisions, unions, conferences, and local churches) at anchor in the Strait of Messina, with Scylla and Charybdis on opposite sides. The increasing currents demand that the church weigh anchor and creatively chart a course that will avoid the rocks and maximize the safety of all vessels in the fleet. In charting that course, true leaders will recognize that some vessels may need to jettison ballast - like gender distinctions in church offices - that makes them unwieldy and puts them at increased risk. Others will need the "ballast" for stability.

Whether this largely symbolic step - recognizing and affirming that the Spirit is leading in the reality and possibility of equal status for female pastors - will result in disunity is largely in the hands of "senior church leaders". Uniformity does not produce or preserve unity. How can Church "leaders" possibly see the present state as one of unity? Their lack of imagination and vision in this area has been on display for at least 20 years. They have built the stage and set the props for an outcome that will make disunity a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's high time for them to dismantle the props and admit that, even though they have not heard His voice, the Lord is apparently writing a different script for this particular act in the life of the church. It is now their job to persuade the world-wide church that the unity of the whole need not be threatened when God's Spirit speaks in tongues.

William Noel
Reply
3 days ago

Nathan,

Do they have really strong backbones? I prefer to say they have skulls too thick for new ideas to penetrate. Either way the result is the same.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
3 days ago

Saying "the Lord is leading"--for whatever decision is made is failing to realize that God never overrides human decisions; humans still have free will and He does not prevent its use. He will not prevent humans from making rash and unwise decisions, just as he will not interfere in whatever is decided. When men are too weak to make hard
decisions, their fallback position is that "God was leading." B.S. alarms should sound.

Nathan Schilt
Reply
3 days ago

"God never overrides human decisions"

So good to know, Elaine, about your inside track on divine providence or lack thereof. I'll remember to check with you next time I wonder if God might be up to something. And just what is the source of this remarkable insight (God doesn't intervene in human affairs) that definitively refutes thousands of years of Judeo-Christian beliefs? Tell me, is it also true that unicorns really can't fly? What else do you know with great certainty about what the god of your imaginings does or does not do? And what gives you such assurance that the god you seem to know and understand is the God whom Christians worship - whose leading they profess to experience and seek to follow?

Even the "skeptical" founding fathers, like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, whom you canonize for alleged "lack of faith," made frequent reference to divine providence. When men of faith are strong enough to make hard decisions, don't they also say God was leading?

Is it great fun for you to digress from an issue about which we fundamentally agree to defecate on basic beliefs and expressions of faith, universally embraced by confessing Christians? The reality, Elaine, is that you think Christian faith in general, and Adventist faith in particular, is pretty much B.S. So it is rich irony that you presume to make dogmatic assertions about what the God of our faith is really like.

Rudy Good
Reply
3 days ago

Nathan,

You misquoted Elaine so you Could show off obliterating the straw man. She said God does not override human decisions. Sounds like free will to me. She did not say God never intervenes. Perhaps she believes that, but why not wait for to say that before flashing your weapon that should probably be restrained with a bit or similar device.

Nathan Schilt
Reply
3 days ago

Sorry, Rudy. You're wrong. I quoted Elaine precisely (See what I put in bold?). Whether the inferences I drew about her prophetic insight into the absence of divine interference in human decision-making are reasonable in her eyes or not remains to be seen. But it is clearly posited as an inference, not a misquote. I'm not sure how a God that is bound, by human notions of free will, not to "interfere in whatever is decided" (Elaine's words) can be reconciled with a God who nevertheless intervenes in human affairs. So I inferred that Elaine, whom I know to be a highly intelligent person and an unbeliever when it comes to miracles, would not attempt to parse words in the manner you have hypothesized.

More importantly, my incredulousness was not prompted by any disagreement with Elaine's philosophy of free will. Rather, I found it astonishing that she would dogmatically and presumptuously make the assertion which I quoted, and then express scorn for Christians who speak of God's leading. Perhaps, since you have jumped to her defense, Rudy, you could help her further by articulating the provenance of her prophetic insight into the nature of God.

Doctorf
Reply
2 days ago

Nathan,

Can you cite any instance where God has over ridden human decisions?

Nathan Schilt
Reply
a day ago

Of course not! But then I did not propose as fact that God does override human decisions. Certainly the Bible is the story of God's interaction and intervention in the course of history, and there are many stories of Him overriding human decisions. But I can't prove that the accounts are literally true. "God's leading" is an affirmation of faith - neither provable nor disprovable. I, like you and Elaine, deeply resent "God is leading" being piously invoked by Church leaders as kryptonite to impede progress and force uniformity on member units that have an equally valid claim on the benefit of divine guidance.

The inability to prove that God has interfered or does interfere in human decision making does not tend to prove the contrary inference - that He does not interfere. Elaine dogmatically asserted as fact a proposition that she cannot possibly prove regarding a being about whom she expresses agnosticism. I say, "Let's keep the baby - 'God is leading' - but throw out the dirty bathwater of authoritarianism - 'So get in line'."

Elaine Nelson
Reply
3 days ago

IWhen men make decisions do they say "God was leading"? How do they know that they were not simply using their God-given brains rather than either claiming or blaming God? Does God only make what man calls "good" decisions?

IOW, when someone makes a decision that later proves disastrous, was God leading? Or does he only lead men to
make good decisions? How can one know beforehand? Does God give a sign?

Nathan Schilt  
Reply  
3 days ago

Good questions, Elaine. No honest Christian has ever failed to ask those questions. But like, Job, they end up falling on their knees before a God that defies human boxes to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." There is no need to trust or believe in a God who is impassive. The absence of satisfactory answers by Christians to these questions doesn't increase the likelihood that your dogma of God must be true.

Rudy Good  
Reply  
3 days ago

The church leadership has bought into an unnecessary distortion of both practical and spiritual matters. Unity does not require conformity and confusing the two is dangerous to spiritual health of individuals and organizations.

Bea  
Reply  
3 days ago

The Church is like an onion being peeled, layer by layer. In our lifetime the unveiling of the truth about EGW and the investigative judgement conflict was undetected by the rank and file church members. The invention of computers and www has opened the floodgates of information to anyone who owns a computer and is intellectually curious about current events in the church. All at once WO, which has been ignored for 131 years, carries huge importance - the onion (church) has a small amount left. It is no longer enough to hear pontifical chants about where the World Church is in regard to WO. I am thankful God gave each of us the ability to use common sense, flavored with intuition, and spiced with tolerance, but knowing when civil liberties which is part of the golden rule is at risk. I believe this is a pivotal moment in SDA church history.

Elaine Nelson  
Reply  
3 days ago

Have you ever peeled away all the onion layers to find it rotten at the core?

Bea  
Reply  
3 days ago

Yes - another thought about the onion, the more layers peeled the faster it gets peeled. How about a ball of yarn with the "rank and file" kitty cats investigating.

James Lanning  
Reply  
3 days ago

Personally, I thought the WO issue to be the working of the Evangelical movement, that continues to grow in the SDA Church. Even women, within the church, shake their heads in disbelief. They had never felt they were loosing out, because the had never pursued ordination to any office. Within my congregation, the ladies do alot of things. They run the show in various programs, and the men support them, in doing so. "Support, or get out of the way!"

The whole issue of women ordination, has nothing to do with equality, but is a tool of the evangelical movement, to drive a wedge into the church membership. It is an affront to the truth of scripture, and will continue to be so, so long as this movement continues to gain ground and advance into our congregations.

And I say, this movement will gain more and more ground, we will continue to see the SDA Church, fall in line with the other Christian Denominations. We may already be a member of the Christian Coalition, a conglomerate of denominations, which also includes the Budist and Islam, and other religious entities.

And I also add, that in "MOST," of the denominations, that have been subduded by the evangelical movement, not only ordain women to offices of the priesthood, "i.e. Decacon, Elder, Pastor, etc.,," but have also submitted to the ordination of gay pastors.

Simply do a survey, of the other denominations, and see if this isn't so. Except for the Amish, or a couple of other groups, that attempt to stay removed from social acceptance, the SDA Church, is probably the last of the Bible keeping groups, to now see itself being eroded, by the winds of the Evangelical agenda.

You can walk literally, from one denomination, to the next, and barely realize any change. One group has become like the next, their doctrines blended in an evangelical mix.

Once saved always saved, the eternal soul, the acceptance of pagan rites, such as Christmas, and Easter, and worship of Sunday. And the ordination of women and now, gays, into those offices of Calling, that God had clearly set apart, to be filled by men. Men who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, who are knowledgeable in His word, and are examples of Godliness, before all their fellow members.

And those Callings, being filled by women, is not a shame on the women, but a shame on the men, who stand aside to see it happen, and shirk the responsibility that God reuirred of them.

But this is the leveling effect of the Evangelical movement. First womens rights are raised as a flag, then next gay rights will be the battle cry of the evangelicals.

It seems the days of, "Thus saith the Lord," are fast becoming a thing of the past, within the SDA Congregation, and with womens ordination, I say that is only the first round of, "things to come."
But then, didn't God tell us in His word, that there would be a falling away? Maybe that falling away, has nothing to do with a loss of numbers, not a reduction of membership, but a falling away from Biblical truth. A falling away, by acceptance of social directives, over Bible Truth. The acceptance of the commandments of men, over, "Thus Saith The Lord."

Kevin Riley
Reply
3 days ago

I presume by 'evangelical' you mean 'ecumenical'. Much of it still remains unsubstantiated, but at least it makes some sort of sense that way.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

Perhaps he means the liberal wing of the SDA Church, which is often called 'Evangelic Adventism', which is more influenced by 'mainstream' American 'Evangelic' Christianity (not the Lutheran Evangelicalism presumably)?

Karl Wagner
Reply
2 days ago

As an Evangelical Adventist, I would like to support ordination without regard to gender. A term coined by Kenneth Samples (worked with Walter Martin at the CRI) to designate those Adventists who held a high view of the gospel. This is not the liberals or progressives of the church, regardless of whatever gospel they hold to. And yes, we bring a sword to divide the Church, between those who hold to the gospel of Righteousness by Faith as opposed to the teaching of Last Generation Perfectionism of works righteousness. Women in ministry, ordained or not, is not what will cause any disunity. Rather, it is the Straight Testimony of the True and Faithful Witness to the Church of Laodicea regarding the gospel that will cause the shaking.

Jake Wilbur
Reply
3 days ago

This is so tiresome. Like it or not, the men in the church and on this post who appear to be terrified, yes, I say terrified, of women's ordination, are not acting as true channels of His love. Indeed, if God opposes WO (which I seriously doubt), it will become known, in His time. But all of this huffing and puffing and threats of blowing the house down is worth nought. Bottom line; women have had it. It's time to use all of His children to deliver His message to a hurting world. No difference between male and female; equal in His sight, so we must demonstrate that to the rest of the world.

What? Did I hear you say that men and women aren't equal in His sight? My, oh, my. And I thought all along that He died for all...that His love and grace were for all in equal measure...that He called up on all to spread the good news...that He created us in His image, male and female. So which part of God's image should lie dormant?

Jean Corbeau
Reply
3 days ago

Terrified? I know many men (and women) who are opposed to WO, but none of them, including myself, are terrified. The ones I've talked to are sad that the church seems to be (as stated by Ellen White) retreating steadily toward Egypt; that it is becoming more conformed to worldly customs, rather than Biblical principles.

But let me turn the tables. From my perspective; what I've seen on this site and another more notorious one, as well as comments by people I've spoken to; those in favor of WO seem to be angry with the rest of us who don't see it their way; so angry that they are willing to defy the will of the body (GC in session) and go their own way, no matter the consequences. That is irresponsible at best; hardcore rebellion at worst.

All4Him
Reply
3 days ago

Yes Jake He died for us all but He has given us different roles that are "equally" important. Its not about power and position it's about service and submission. And yes your right women have had it, just see how many women are part of the 7,080 and growing respondants to the Christorculture website....

Are you not equal to a women Jake because she can carry your child? Yes there are physical differences and different roles designed by our Creator, His plan was not a mistake...

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

All4Him, you aren't associated with this Christ or Culture website by any chance? Spruking your own wares here perhaps? Perhaps it has worked, as I have just gone to have a look...

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago
And are perhaps either: Shane Hilde, Stephen Bohr (that would be somewhat impressive if you were), Doug Bachelor (even more impressive), Dwight Hall (sorry, never heard of you), Rick or Gwen Shorter (you look like nice people), Dr Agatha (unlikely, I think you are a man), Magna Parks (also a woman), Ron Neifort (sorry again, never heard of you), or Kenneth Cox (wow if you were, didn't really think you would still be alive to be honest)?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

I think you're Kenneth Cox, which is why you use a fake name and have enough time to comment quite a lot on AToday. I think Stephen Bohr and Doug Bachelor would be too busy.

If you are Kenneth Cox, I enjoyed that time when you told a non-Adventist audience that those who say the Beast Power is the Papacy is an 'extreme view'. Something like that, no doubt you have been living that down for some time.

If you do happen to be Stephen Bohr, I really enjoyed your talks on religious liberty and why the seventh day has no evening and morning refrain in Gen 2:1. But if you are Stephen Bohr, I really didn't like your quite fanatical approach to wedding rings.

If you are Doug Bachelor, to be honest I haven't watched anything with you in it since Net 98.

If you are someone else - sorry - never heard of you.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

You can rely on what you think in your own mind and bosom of understanding, as the Mormon's do. Perhaps at times you might even think it is God talking to you. Many a cult leader has demanded, and a naïve cult follower has allowed, truly frightening things without any form of notion of accountability according to the Word. I think the approach you suggest is very, very dangerous, and not entirely scriptural.

As for me, I let the Spirit speak to me through the Word. I follow the example of Christ, who didn't rely on His own supposed superior logic when put under the crucible of temptation, but always replied, 'It is written...'

I will continue to understand the Law written on my heart as a reflection of God's character as found in the Decalogue, which has not been abrogated, not through an adherence to legalism, but transformed through the power of the Gospel. As for Jewish ceremonial practices, they were mere shadows now fulfilled in Christ, the true High Priest, as were the civil-sundry laws of theocratic Israel, now fulfilled in Christ, the true King.

I think I have said enough on this topic and to use Stephen Foster's phrase, the rodeo is probably done, at least for me – good bye.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

Sorry wrong article!

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
2 days ago

As a denominational employee of a union conference for 27 years (through 2003) I can attest that this particular part of the denominational structure is by any standard, by far the most "politically astute" element of the church, aside from the General Conference itself. We understood our role at the North Pacific Union to be filling the distinctive need to safeguard our conferences from individually being intimidated and railroaded (if they were perceived to have stepped out of line by the Big Boys in Silver Spring) in matters where the GC sought uniformity, over against the trends at the grassroots to be experimental. We had several confrontations with the GC during my time in denominational work, most notably over the issue of model constitutions and the need to change those constitutions in the West to resolve serious issues raised in this progressive real estate of the church (also, I might add, one of the most financially liberal unions, and most dedicated to mission endeavor). At that time we saw the GC as the "conservative" voice and the West as the progressive voice, and there was a sense at that time that the GC was invoking "Kingly Power" (or in today's parlance, "Dictatorial Propensities") to try to push the West back into an earlier mould. The West stood strong, and those provisions pioneered then have once again (as ordinarily happens) been adopted by many other unions.

The conferences in the coastal regions of the United States were those most set upon by the General Conference of Ellen White's day, and really not much has changed since then. That we must raise Adventist blood pressures by creating showdowns on high-noon-Sundays is lamentable, but it just seems to be the way things have always been done, when intransigent conservatism crosses swords with the impatient coastal regions. I cannot concur that these conferences are in "rebellion." This is a terribly imprecise appellation to hang around the necks of these massive unions with comparatively highly-educated laymen and great hearts for the church and its mission. Rather I would see these unions as "freedom fighters" against the constant threat of kingly powers being exercised to thwart the wheels of progress in the church's centers of innovation. Unions were clearly created for the purpose of tamping back the...
natural tendencies of centralized authority to exercise complete hegemony over the provinces. We can see once again that, as I have frequently told those who ask, "Sure, you could close the unions, but you'd have to reinvent something similar within 20 years, simply to keep the GC from running amok over your local plans and strategies."

This is clearly a showdown, and perhaps it is a great showdown, but we've seen it all many times before, and nobody ends up getting shot or drawn and quartered, though it has cost a GC president or two his job, from time to time....

Ervin Taylor

Reply

2 days ago

I missed Elaine comment about the church being an onion which when you peel back the layers is rotten at the core.

May I slightly modify this conclusion. I'd like to use the onion metaphor to say that when you peel back traditional institutional Adventism and come to the center -- surprise! . . . there is nothing of a real religious character there! The strictly religious elements have been replaced with those of a bureaucratically-focused institution, spending large amounts of tithe money devoted to maintaining the organizational status quo which is regarded by many as, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, a terrible waste of money. Take the money that it takes to run the bureaucracy and give it to the primary and secondary schools and our universities/colleges to raise salaries of teachers and lower tuition costs. Fat chance!

With a few exceptions, there are not "bad people" running the system. Far from it. These are, again with a few exceptions, good and godly people doing the best they can to keep an early 20th century church political system from going broke. Their main unstated motto is "keep the system intact at least until I retire."

Elaine Nelson

Reply

2 days ago

Erv,

Your description of the metaphor is much more apt. It is inherent in all institutions that the most important goal is to keep it running, like a hamster on a treadmill, until those ready to retire can hop off with their pensions intact.

But like government institutions are discovering, those pension promises, unless sufficiently continued by the tithe payers, may not be as secure as was once thought. Something seems inherently contrary to the Gospel workers that once their "probie" years have passed, it is a guaranteed lifetime income. How many of their contributors have such security? It is because most could do no "honest" non-church work and with no vocational skills. The few I have know who voluntarily left were at a loss until they continued their education in gaining another markeable skill. There really are very few job openings for a SDA theological graduate outside the SDA ghetto.

Karen & Thomas Kotoske

Reply

2 days ago

If they have their way, the General Conference fellows will be 'in study' of the WO issue for decades to come and when they finally peer up over their glasses they'll see their audience has departed.

Bea

Reply

2 days ago

In fact the audience has been departing in various ways for some time. Dare I say escalating?

All4Him

Reply

2 days ago

Let the shifting and shaking begin.....we need to make room for people of the Word. Its about submission and service not position and power....

Doctorf

Reply

2 days ago

First the CUC and now the whole PUC will most likely vote to make WO a policy. Another good decision! What is the GC going to do? More whining and meaningless letters of protest? In keeping with Ervin's comments the GC is desperately trying to hold onto its antiquated top down authoritarian system. The GC structure and accompanying corruption is why I have diverted tithe money to our local church. The unions could in effect neuter the GC power by keeping tithe money local.

God's Will Paramount

Reply

2 days ago

The current GC President has at least two thirds of the Adventist World membership on his side against WO. He has nothing to fear about his re-election in 2015. You cannot tell a Ted Wilson how to run the 7th day Adventist church. His dad used to run it and the Wilsons go back a long way in Adventist history.

A vocal, articulate, and well-to-do minority in the West may trumpet the pro WO cause loud and clear and take along with them their constituencies and thus re-define church policy/politics/theology etc. in their own terms, while maintaining that they are bona fide, and loyal 7th day Adventists. However actions speak louder than words. They are in point of fact challenging and ignoring GC leadership, and winning. That is very serious. The very heart of
GCHQ leadership has been undermined for the whole world wide Adventist church to behold, at the CUC meeting. If the same follows at the PUC, GCHQ leadership will not rest until they sort this mess out. Call me an alarmist, if you wish, but having been in church leadership for nearly two decades and sat on countless committees (including GC church manual committee), etc., I can clearly see that we are fast moving towards a painful and powerful showdown. The GCHQ's authority was undermined in a spectacular way when CUC voted for WO. They will not, indeed, cannot take this lightly. They are making one last ditch effort to rein in the belligerents prior to PUC. If they fail then expect some fireworks, between now and 2015, the likes of which we may never have experienced in Adventist denominational history. Heaven help us then!

Bea
Reply
2 days ago

It is my understanding that the West may be the minority but it also provides the $$$$ to defray expenses and shore up other parts of the world church who are unable to due to lack of $$$. We are not belligerants (sounds like naughty children) but intelligent people who don't respond well to "children are to be seen and not heard". That went out the door decades ago. Finally we are standing up to the last vestage of civil rights. Heaven is helping us by being the modern day David dealing with Goliath (GC). Who would have thought it would happen within rather than without?

Kevin Riley
Reply
2 days ago

I suspect the decision was made some time ago that the GC will support the part of the world that is growing quickest, regardless of who pays the money. It's been acknowledged for a long time that our refusal to ordain women is harming the church in western countries - both by discouraging current members and by making it impossible for many non-members to even consider joining us. Having decided many times over the last 5 decades that there is no biblical or SOP reason not to ordain women, the only reason why the GC continues to refuse is the effect it will have elsewhere, particularly in Africa. Apparently it is better for one part of the world field to perish (or shrink to a small and conservative remnant totally out of touch with society) than to lose numbers. And for those who deny it is happening, just what percentage of churches in western Europe, GB, NA, and Australia is made up primarily of elderly people with no real prospect of reaching their community? How many have gone for years with no baptism of anyone from the community? If not for migrants, how long would the church in these areas last?

All4Him
Reply
2 days ago

"Having decided many times over the last 5 decades that there is no biblical or SOP reason not to ordain women...."

Kevin I have seen the opposite happen in two different churches, people who joined the advent movement because they thought we followed the Word of God. Then to be discouraged by the push for ordination of women elders and past left.

(or shrink to a small and conservative remnant totally out of touch with society) humm..... sounds like a little shifting and shaking making room for the influx.... that is happening.

Kevin Riley
Reply
2 days ago

So you don't believe the general public is affected by our refusal to treat women equally? Or that it contributes to the exodus from our church? There have been a number of surveys where a different result is indicated. Of course there are people in all western countries who long for a return to 'the good old days' when women (and most men) knew their place and kept to it. But I don't believe they are the majority. And so I wouldn't be holding my breath while waiting for that 'influx' you're expecting. I really believe that, when it happens, the 'shaking' of Adventism will be over something more substantial than WO. Perhaps something central to the gospel?

Bea
Reply
a day ago

Re: "the 'shaking' of Adventism will be over something more substantial than WO. Perhaps central to the gospel". Perhaps the subject of WO will cause us to experience an 'Aha Moment' - that causes us to stop, observe, evaluate other areas of Church Doctrine we don't agree with but have never given ourselves permission to recognize and take action on. To compare how accurately SDA has followed the Bible (not the Clear Word) vs 28 doctrines of the church.

Ervin Taylor
Reply
a day ago

Our conservative friends seem to be always talking about "The Skaking" which, as I recall, comes from a line from EGW. "All4Him" mentions "a little shifting and shaking making room for the influx." Influx? What Influx? Do conservatives really think that a church with a hierarchy that refuses to accept that women are equal of men to serve as pastors is going to attract a whole lot of new mature converts? I suppose that everyone is entitled to his or her own fantasy world.

Bea
Reply
a day ago

Someone mentioned that the SDA membership growth is in the third world countries. I believe because they have not
had educational opportunities they are more receptive to indoctrination. All4Him refers to the shaking and the influx/sp. is coming from those third world countries. At the same time NAD is decreasing because there is a "no tolerance" for what seems to be moral/ethical issues as well as acceptance of the New Covenant. Anyone I have talked to who has gone elsewhere are experiencing a wonderful experience with their Lord and enjoying a whole new world of Christian believers. At the same time, conservative saints in the SDA church are looking down their noses at those who are decreed "lost." So judgemental and sanctimonious.

Ella M
Reply
2 days ago

It is heartbreaking to realize that "a serious threat to the unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church" may ultimately be laid at the foot of its leadership that refuses to recognize its cultural differences. These men have chosen to take on the sacred responsibility to guide us as Christ's representatives yet are taking a course that can bring on the schism they fear. I would direct them to Paul's example of dealing with the Judaizers.

Glen
Reply
2 days ago

If the vote of the Columbia Union Conference constituency session on July 29 to ordain women pastors is "a serious threat to the unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church," then disfellowship the members of the Columbia Union Conference like the father of the current present did years ago in I believe Romania.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
2 days ago

A little confusing. Are you saying that Neal Wilson disfellowshipped the Columbia Union Conference years ago? What do you mean by mentioning Romania? What's the connection with the Columbia Union Conference?

Glen
Reply
2 days ago

Sorry, it was Hungarian members, not Romanian members that were disfellowshipped. "Q.: What about the 1,400 Hungarians who were disfellowshipped for protesting the Church's membership in the Council of Free Churches?... "Wilson: A good question...The members of this group do not recognize any world authority in the Church....We have advised the dissident group to recognize the world Church organization to place their churches in the world Church." (General Conference president Neal C. Wilson, in Pacific Union Recorder (official paper of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists), February 18, 1985, p 4).

Kevin Riley
Reply
2 days ago

The connection with the Columbia Union Conference is this:
The Columbia Union Conference does not accept the General Conference's position or authority on woman ordination. In the 1980s, there were a group of Hungarian members who did not accept the General Conference's position or authority regarding membership in the Counsel of Free Churches and the then general conference prsident (Neal Wilson) disfellowshipped these members. Ted Wilson could, like his father, disfellowship those in the Columbia Union conference who do not accept the General Conference's position or authority on woman ordination.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
a day ago

I thought it was the Hungarian conference who disfellowshipped them. They appealed to Neal Wilson for help, and even though it seems they may have had good reasons for what they did, in the end it came down to a question of accepting church authority. I can't remember the details, but I know when I read about it it seemed that we did not appear to act in a Christian manner in dealing with the issue.

carolina buckeye
Reply
a day ago

Phariscees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and Christians - all hating each other. And then Jewish and Gentiles Christians hating each other. 2,000 years and nothing has changed. God should go back to bed.
are two ways that Adventist's vote, one is with their feet,(leaving), the other with their wallets. This action by the CUC will bring division and discension in the church. Its a sad day really.

Truth Seeker
Reply
a day ago

"Personaly, I thought the WO issue to be the working of the Evangelical movement, that continues to grow in the SDA Church. Even women, within the church, shake their heads in disbelief." Jas Lanning

Isn't that the truth, my good man. It's also very disappointing that those who promote WO use a non-voted resolution to support their tenuous position on the matter.

If you believe the SDA church is the True church and leave because women's ordination is not approved why would you leave? And why would anyone believe that those of us who know WO is contrary to Scripture would not be as tenacious as those who mistakenly support WO?

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

When Unions (German, Columbia and perhaps Pacific) disregard strong counsel from GC leadership based on two GC sessions, although they may be 100% right in their own eyes, they are setting themselves up as a superior authority at worst, or a parallel one at best. How can they then still claim to be bona fide 7th Adventists, or have they forgotten how we function as a church. It's not a matter of who is right and who is wrong on WO but what is the respectful, and humble way we do church with regards to the GC leadership (which comprises all Unions leadership World wide) as per Divinely inspired SOP counsel. If they can do what is right in their sight, what is to stop other Unions to go and do likewise in theirs? And where do you draw the line? Then what is the use of a GC leadership that all (i.e. GC leaders and all Unions leadership world wide). Let's let be clear about one thing. When President Ted Wilson spoke at CUC he was not just representing himself, and he is most certainly entitled to his convictions, but the whole Adventist family world wide. I fail to see how such a serious and rampant spirit of restlessness in our midst is helping to advance the Gospel Commission and hastening the coming of the Lord?

Joe Erwin
Reply
a day ago

Those adventists who are not unrepentantly brittle authoritarians would do well to adopt principles of equity and fairness and move on about their business of being Christians committed to advancing the message of Jesus. It seems to me that being a Christian is far more important than being a member of a rigid sect or cult or denomination. Then you would have the option of devoting your tithe directly to helping those in need, rather than supporting a contentious organizational infrastructure.

That is just the way it looks to me from the outside....

Nathan Schilt
Reply
a day ago

Your point is well taken, Joe. The problem is that institutions have lots of money, power, and jobs. I am not employed by an Adventist institution, and have not been so employed since I worked summers and part time during the school year at Porter Hospital in Denver nearly 50 years ago. So I always wonder why people, who really dislike most everything about the Church as it is, keep working inside institutional Adventism. I happen to love my church. But I don't emotionally identify with the "world" body. It's there, and I know my church is connected to the local conference, which is connected to the union, etc. But I belong to and identify with my local church community.

But I also recognize that these are people who have dedicated their careers and lives to the Church, and cannot easily walk away from it to find meaning and influence in other Christian communities. They also love the Sabbath and other practices and beliefs of the Adventist subculture. They have evolved; their local communities have evolved; and they do not define their SDA faith by the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. They are not members of a rigid cult or sect. They are affiliated with a Church that, at the moment, happens to be controlled at its highest levels, by some pretty backwards thinking. That top level really has no legal jurisdiction over us as Church members or even the decisions of regional bodies to decide issues like ordination.

Our ability to be Christians advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ is not impaired by our affiliation with a Church whose leadership at the moment wants to move it in a sectarian, cultic direction. Quite the contrary. We believe that staying and standing for a principle that should be self-evident is the business of Christ and the gospel. I guess we're all Marlboro smokers. We'd rather fight than switch.

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

Fair comment. WO? What's the fuss, really. Let's talk about MO (Men's Ordination) for a minute, shall we. Where in the 66 books of the Bible do we see men being ordained as PASTORS? If anyone can give me that one text, just one, I will be eternally grateful to you. Thanks.
So Acts 6:6 is a fluke? For were there not a list of men in Acts 6:5?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

These men were prayed over as they went out to distribute bread. To correlate that with ordination is stretching things a bit too far. In many churches, as the elders carry the communion bread, a prayer is said and there are both women and men.

All4Him
Reply
a day ago

In Acts 6:10 they were amazed by his speech so they caused trouble in verses 11-13.

They went out to distribute "the bread of life" ordained in chapter 6 and killed in chapter 7.....

All4Him
Reply
a day ago

Acts 6:4 explains a lot too.

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

As does Gal 3:28. Actually, there are a lot of verses in the Bible that 'explain a lot'.

But I think you are stretching things a bit far to claim Acts 6 records the ordination of pastors.

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

Which version are you reading from AllforHim. All Bible versions I know of, in any language, including the original, speak of men of good repute etc, who were appointed to serve tables because the Hellenists were complaining that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. They chose seven and the apostles laid their hands on them as they prayed for them. The result was phenomenal. The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Conclusions: 1. The passage you quoted has absolutely and clearly nothing to do with the ordaining of male pastors. 2. If you want your church to grow phenomenally, ordain men to serve tables, so widows will not get neglected, and have their need for bread met daily. Our problem with decades of "fight" in the church to the very top of GC leadership is that we try to defend two church traditions/policies (ordination of men and commissioning of women) as if they were the commands of God and we add insult to injury by wanting to stretch the traditions/policies further by pushing for WO. Let's heed the very serious and solemn warning by John the Apostle: " I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book (the Bible): if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book..." (Revelation 21:18).

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

Kevin, Gal 3:28 may 'explain a lot' but one thing this text does NOT explain, and you have not answered my question, where in the 66 books of the Bible do we see men being ordained as PASTORS? Please don't duck and dive. By all the comments you have posted on several blogs, you are one of the few scholarly voices of reason I enjoy reading, including your comment of stretching Acts 6 a little too far in response to All4Him. I am not asking for much surely. Where IS that one elusive Golden biblical text. I have read my bible over and over again and I cannot find it. Neither is it found in any bible concordance I can think of. While you are at it you might like to do me a little exegesis of the word pastor. Thanks a lot.

All4Him
Reply
a day ago

In Book Number 54

1 Timothy 2:7 (KJV) Paul writes WHEREUNTO I AM ORDAINED A PREACHER.......

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

Does it bother you that most modern versions don't use the word 'ordained'. Nor does the Greek - certainly not as we use it.

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

I have already said I don't believe it is there. In the Greek NT there is no text dealing with 'ordination' as such. I think a rough approximation can be made between 'appointing' someone and the laying on of hands, but I don't see
ordination anywhere in the sense of setting someone apart in the sense of clergy Vs laity. The word ‘pastor’ is not common, and I don’t believe (from memory) that anyone is identified as a pastor. I do some some possibility in equating ‘pastor’ with ‘deacon’. But in Acts 6 the 7 men are not identified as deacons, nor does ‘waiting on tables’ really line up with what we know deacons did then. ‘Diakonos’ seems to have been more of a spiritual office than primarily a matter of looking after the physical needs of the church.

David Scott
Reply
a day ago

I used to coach a very good soccer team. We were a division 1 team that started out as just a recreational team. In order for them to become a division 1 team, they all had to play as a team in unison. When they finally learned that it was not about the individual and that it was really about the good of the whole, they stopped being selfish and self-centered. Then they became the team that could not be beaten. Along the way, there were, inevitably people who did not agree with my coaching philosophies. Instead of reasoning with me about my decisions, they left the team. Before they left the team, they tried to destroy the team by telling as many people as possible about their grievances in an effort to gain popular opinion. Because of this selfish and self-centered act, it took this team several years longer to achieve the goal that was set before them. This appears to be what is going on in the SDA church over WO. I don’t understand what the importance of ordination is. Without ordination, you can still preach the word of God. Without ordination, you can still minister to the multitudes. Without ordination, the only things you don’t have is a pay check and title. If that is what this is really about, then your heart is not really in it. As the coach of that soccer team, we had 1 keeper, 4 defenders, 4 midfielders, and 2 forwards. If 1 of those players decided not to play the position given, the team became dysfunctional. Do you really want to be a part of the reason the SDA church becomes dysfunctional?

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

The paycheck and title is the same in most cases. Think of it this way: would you want to be a goalkeeper if you could only stand in the goal most of the time, but when it looked like the opposition might score, you had to let the captain take over? I see this issue as an illustration that the team is dysfunctional, not the reason why it is.

David Scott
Reply
a day ago

The reason why the team became dysfunctional sometimes is because they were not satisfied with the position they were to play. They wanted to play somewhere else, so they just did what they wanted to do and abandoned their position to play the one they chose. The point is we all have a part in the body of Christ. If we just focus on being the best we can be, at the part we are, we will not have this divide in our church. I understand both sides of this debate, but the real problem is that we are hurting the church more than helping the church. Who wants to be baptised into a church where it’s authority is usurped. One thing I know is that this church will not fall, but this debate will cause some people to fall and others to not come at all.

All4Him
Reply
about 18 hours ago

Good analogy David, there are many men and women who refuse to fulfill the God given roles. We even know how the game will end and still refuse to play our positions.

Joe Erwin
Reply
a day ago

So, if it isn’t at all about the pay check, perhaps all the men should voluntarily give up their pay checks....

Joe Erwin
Reply
a day ago

I am unaware of the current situation, but there was a time when the church was notoriously stingy with salaries, and this was especially so for women. When my mother finally left service as an SDA school teacher, she easily found employment in a public school at double the salary—not much, even so, but at least a living wage at the time (from less than $4K to more than $8K per year). And, I believe the men at that time, automatically were paid more than the women. My own experience with adventist wages was earning $210/mo for 9 (not even 10) months to teach all courses in all grades (1-8) in a one-room school. And that was not a living wage, even under the primitive conditions of that time and place. It was a wonderful experience for me, but it was not a fair wage, and that part certainly did not leave a positive impression on me.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

There is no earthly (or heavenly) reason that women should not be recognized in exactly the same way that men are in the Christian church. To do otherwise is to reject the pronouncement that “in Christ there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” To make and ecclesial separation between men and women, while honoring Jew and Greek, slave and free, is to separate what God has not divided.

Structural organization is not designed by God but by man who attempted to devise the operating of the early church for the best efficiency. It should always be adjusted or changed when circumstances change. The disposition of
church leaders was not handed down on high from Sinai but God has given humans the common sense, when it is used, to decide how to function best in the culture in which they live. This may be different in some areas than others, but nothing should be done that will inhibit God's work in any area.

Bea
Reply
about 23 hours ago

And to further add to your statement Elaine. Common sense, intuition, emotional awareness, power of intension, energy tools of the soul; these are words and phrases that go beyond our "5 senses" of taste, smell, touch, hear, see. Think of our world before and after the invention of the microscope. In this century we are going beyond those 5 senses and it's an exciting adventure because I believe we're digging deeper into what really is spirituality (which is beyond religion). WO is a struggle to deal with equality and if we are made in the image of God, what is the problem with our thinking? Why are we so hung up on this issue? Some of us women in this conversation remember not being able to play sports in the academy, we certainly couldn't wear slacks. It was not appropriate decor and demeanor for our SDA young women. The WO issue should be a "no brainer" in this century. Going forward, conscientious young parents will choose a church that respects equality among gender - they want their church to mirror their value system with regard to equality and be a spiritual example for our daughters and sons.

Edmund & Ruth Jones
Reply
about 18 hours ago

Perhaps we should all read Revelation 1:4-6. It seems that Jesus wants all of us to be loved by Jesus, forgiven by Jesus, and made priests by Jesus. Read your Greek New Testament. It seems to be very inclusive. Adventists have always been known for their use of John's writing in Revelation. What do you think?

David Scott
Reply
about 12 hours ago

When quoting Revelation 1:4-6, Particularly verse 6, the Greek word there that was translated priests is hieresus. When I looked it up I found multiple definitions, but it spoke directly to the meaning of Revelation 1:6. Listen to what it says. Of Jewish priests, of believers, constituting a kingdom of priests, a holy priesthood and not a special sacerdotal class in contrast to the laity; all believers are commanded to offer sacrifices. So what it is saying is that the way it used priests here is not in contrast to the laity. This specifically does not condone ordaining women. In fact, it doesn't condone ordaining men either. It is just saying that we should live holy lives making the sacrifices necessary as a people who love Jesus. You can't twist it to mean more than that.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 11 hours ago

The priesthood is centred on sacrifice and intercession. Ultimately, Christ is the true priest who offers a sacrifice and makes intercession. In a derived sense, the church carries on that work on earth, and so the priesthood is communal. As a community we offer ourselves as 'a living sacrifice' and intercede for each other and for the world.

The question is whether that should be exercised by a small select group on behalf of the group, or properly belongs to the group as a whole. Our traditional answer has been that is is exercised by the community and not by a group set apart. Our pastors are/were evangelists, preachers, church planters, and teachers, but not priests. I believe that is also supported by the NT example. In time, the Christian church came to view Christian ministry as being like the OT priesthood. In that system, deacons, elders and bishops are set apart into a special group called 'clergy' who offer sacrifices and intercede between God and the 'laity'. We have critisised churches with that system for not being Biblical, yet we seem to have virtually copied that system with deacons, elders and pastors, and seem to be moving to equating pastors (at least, some would include elders) with priests. We have also copied their arguments over whether women can hold any or all of those positions. That some have argued that women cannot be bishops and have 'ruling authority', but they can be deacons and priests as their authority derives from that of the bishop also parallels some of our arguments. I cringe when we argue women cannot be conference presidents or ordained as pastors and have 'ruling authority', but can work as pastors and elders and the assumption seems to be that the way it operated with authority derived from the President or a senior pastor. All authority in our church is derived from the community ('the church') and the community delegates to that certain organisational levels. The authority is not derived from that of the GC, or the GC president, nor is the authority of 'lower' levels or their executive officers derived from the GC or the GC president. All levels operate on behalf of the community of believers and derive their authority from that community and exercise it on behalf of the community. The community can, in session or through teh executive committee, legitimately impose its will on any and all officers and employees.

I believe we would get further in this discussion if we all framed it as a disagreement over how to interpret the Bible and put it into practice rather than as a disagreement between one side that is following the Bible and another that is unduly influenced by culture to ignore the 'clear' teachings of the Bible. There is a difference in how the Bible is approached, and both sides are sensitive to the cultural implications of our beliefs and practices. And they should be. But it is not, and never has been, a question of choosing between Christ and culture for most people on both sides.

I also dislike the trend to seeing a conspiracy in the action of one group or another. The unions are legitimately reacting to the concerns of their constituency, as is the GC. Let's remember that the call to unity was put out by the GC executive, and all the unions wanting to ordain women (whether they have voted to do so or not) are members of that committee, as are division presidents who support ordaining women to all positions. Whatever Ted Wilson's views may be, as GC President, he is obliged to represent the views of the executive committee. Had Jan Paulsen been GC President, he would have done virtually the same thing. About the only 'conspiracy' there is evidence for...
(and it is fairly abundant) is the 'conspiracy to prevent an all-out brawl at GC session (and probably a long time afterwards) by putting up a clear proposal to allow women to work as deacons, elders and pastors, or to allow women to be ordained as pastors. Perhaps the issue could be handled differently, and passing the decision on to the unions or divisions when it first came up may have been the best thing to do. If the current study on ordination delivers the same conclusion as the previous ones (which is likely, as no new evidence has emerged to change anything) and the result is that the Bible neither prohibits nor commands the ordination of women (or anyone, IMO), then I would hope the GC would declare it to be a matter for each conference/mission to decide in consultation with the unions and division, as was done with the ordination of women as elders. Given that we have always said elders and pastors were essentially identical except with regard to the sphere in which they work, that would have been a logical thing to do back when this first came up.

David Scott
Reply
about 12 hours ago

I have never taken the time to study this subject out, and I honestly don't know what side I would take at this point, but what I do see as someone not emotionally attached to this subject is that those who are for WO seem to be citing things out of context and mis-quoting things. It becomes very murky when people do that. God is not the author of confusion. If we look at the word of God with pure hearts we will find the true answers to the questions we seek.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
about 12 hours ago

Too much emphasis is placed on getting all the appropriate Bible texts and EGW writings in support or either position. Anyone can prove almost anything using Bible texts: that is why there are not only so many different denominations but so many different views within the SDA church.

Isn't it about time that equality and compromise be used? This is the solution used by the early church when there were very strong disagreements. Both sides won: neither were forced to go against their consciences. That's a wonderful Bible example which has not been used in this situation.

God's Will Paramount
Reply
5 minutes ago

Since pastors ordination is so ingrained in our church system, although it is not a direct command from the Lord, and since women feel slighted for being left out of the equation, the best service the GC can render to the World Church in session in 2015, is simply to recommend that Unions approve ordination of both men and women, on equal par, for the conferences who have approved of the rite in session. End of story. Hence it will be a win-win situation all round.

Anonymous
In the debate over ordination practices leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have made impassioned pleas for “unity” and “submission.” Many Adventists are not aware of the long discussion of these topics that go back to the very beginning of the movement.

J. David Newman, editor of Adventist Today, recommends the following two articles from *Ministry*, the denomination’s official journal for the clergy published by the General Conference. These provide significant information from both Scripture and church history.

“The Use and Abuse of Authority” by Andrew Bates was published in the June 2002 issue of *Ministry* and can be found at this web address:

“The Jerusalem Council: a model for Utrecht?” also by Andrews Bates was published in the April 1995 issue of *Ministry*, prior to the General Conference Session held that summer in Utrecht, Holland. It can be read at this web address:
http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1995/April/the-jerusalem-council-a-model-for-utrecht

"When there is a lot of hot rhetoric and emotion, it is vital to keep a strong grip on truth," one Adventist Today reader has commented. "The truth has always been more important to Seventh-day Adventists than emotional opinions."

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Share your thoughts about this article:

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

If unity was all important for Christians, even when it was against our own clear understandings of the scriptures, we would all still belong to the Roman Catholic Church - wouldn't we?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
2 days ago

Historically, the Christian church has never been unified. From the beginning there was a separation between the Jews and Christians and never since then has there been complete unity. Why should we expect a much larger world church where there is instant communication, to be in unity? It's like climbing the Escher stairs or belling Schroder's cat: ain't gonna happen.

The best solution we should hope for is that each union decides certain cultural issues (as the church has never settled a biblical or theological doctrine on WO) that will work best for their particular territories. It is asinine to believe that all
peoples around the world will dress the same, speak the same, like the same music, etc. For those who are focused on certain issues; be it strict vegetarianism, dress, or the role of women, why are we fighting over it? How does it advance the Gospel? Some things can deter the Gospel and we should be certain that our wants do not harm the church's mission.

White Night

Reply
2 days ago

Good thoughts, Elaine!

Steve Tanner

Reply
2 days ago

It has always been my understanding that each person must work out their own salvation with Jesus and have a relationship with Him. Should I wait for my church to do this for me not wanting to question their authority? Maybe I'm missing the point here but I have seen some very disgusting things go on in the leadership. I'm not sure they are about Jesus or about running a large business. I think EGW was very right when she said many a pastor should still have his hand on the plow. (that's from memory and not sure where it's found) After some of the things I have witnessed I am unable to trust the authority of this church or any other. If all were focused on Jesus we would not be facing these complicated issues today.

Edwin A. Schwisow

Reply
2 days ago

The "problem" with large numbers is that it becomes commensurately more difficult to expect uniformity, the more the numbers and cultures increase inside the fold. I'm not sure Brother Ted understands this dynamic. I'm sure he recognizes it, but does he understand it? As the numbers increase, the "areas of full agreement" will tend to become fewer and fewer, until as in the Roman Catholic Church of today, the only thing EVERYONE agrees on is that the Pope is their leader. Whether they follow his leading or not is another matter altogether, but they DO agree that he is in charge. To be "united" to the Roman Catholic Church, that's essentially the one fundamental belief. To expect a church our size to practice 28 separate unifying fundamentals—well, the Adventist people are far better educated, independent, and self-determined. And this makes us cats much harder to herd. Ours is a church that in every way requires a wide range of diversity, with a simple statement of belief such as the one devised by James White back in the early years of the church to keep us marching the same overall direction.

Kevin Riley

Reply
2 days ago

As the RC church has discovered, it takes more than acceptance of a leader to keep unity. They also have the idea of 'the church', from which authority and identity is derived. Even people who dislike the Pope, and don't believe in papal infallibility, continue to believe in 'the church' and remain RC. The more people you have, the more you need unity based on an idea, or a set of beliefs. Then you have to be prepared to allow a lot of dissension and variety of practice on just about everything except those beliefs. Our church is set up to allow that to a much greater extent than the RCC. But it requires us to trust each other, and God. I suspect we need a little more than James White provided, but it isn't a bad place to start. Work the 28 down to a good biblical
number like 12, 10 or 7, emphasise unity and servant leadership, and I think we might be surprised at how well it would work. As long as we could get on with our work without constantly watching to see our neighbours are doing what we would do. And that may be where it would all come apart.

Joe Erwin
Reply
2 days ago

"United" is fundamental for Catholics in the sense of it being the "universal" (=catholic) Christian church. My sister is Catholic, but says to her that only means catholic (with a small c). In other words, she is a Christian, regards of what church she attends (or doesn't), and she does not accept the infalibility of the Pope. She disagrees with much of the organization and practice, yet serves as a counselor to the bishop in her diocese. As I have mentioned before, she grew up as an adventist and studied history, religion, and theology in the 1950s. Despite being fully qualified otherwise, she was denied advancement into the seminary because she was a woman. Had any women gone to the adventist seminary before 1960? When were the first? Or have adventist women been trained in non-adventist seminaries? Or what. I'm behind times on this....

Kevin Riley
Reply
2 days ago

The church began to encourage women to study for ministry after the decision in 1974 (1975?) to allow women to be ordained as elders. It would seem they expected that ordination as pastors would follow soon after. It does seem to me to be unfair - perhaps even cruel - to encourage women to consider ministry as a career and then still be arguing 40 years later (assuming it comes up in 2015) as to whether to go ahead with that or not. Should the conservative view that women cannot be ordained become policy, it will cause a lot of unrest in many circles, as it will make women pastors and elders impossible. It may not be possible, in a wide-ranging review of ordination, to restrict the question simply to 'can women working as pastors be ordained?' as the GC has managed to do for decades.

I would like to see the GC come out and say that, if the result is the same as in the past - that the Bible neither commands nor prohibits the ordination of women - that they will allow those areas [divisions or unions] who want to ordain women to go ahead. It would be extremely unfair to ask for unions to wait until the review is finished, and then again say 'wait, some people will be upset if you go ahead'.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
a day ago

Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and Christians - all hating each other. And then Jewish and Gentiles Christians hating each other. 2,000 years and nothing has changed. God should go back to bed.

Truth Seeker
Reply
a day ago

"To expect a church our size(sic) to practice 28 separate unifying fundamentals—well, the Adventist people are far better educated, independent, and self-determined."

Ed, exactly what does education have to do with what is truth? Isn't that a bit patronizing to those who have not
had the opportunity to secure advanced education?

Rebellion is rebellion and we have seen it in the CUC action; that is very clear to any objective onlooker who understands a bit about church governance. In the political realm it appears to me that supporters of their "man" are much more loyal than some who profess to be SDAS are to church beliefs and decisions. I exclude former SDAS since I do not read their posts. If I left the church I would not be posting either here nor on Spectrum.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

The level of education has nothing to do with salvation; but those who are poorly educated can much easier be told what to believe without question. This worked for most of Christian history: the clergy read parts of the Bible, usually in Latin, and gave their interpretations. The illiterate parishoners could not question as they could not read the Bible for themselves.

This has not changed much, and even occurs in the U.S. The SDA evangelist holds a few weeks' seminar warning from D&R and probably 99% of the non-SDA in attendance have never read these books and so they are amazed at the acumen of this itinerant preacher and within a few weeks are dunked in the tank. Don't tell me I'm wrong, I've seen this for more than 80 years and nothing has changed.

Why do so many SDAs accuse the Catholics? The Bible makes no mention of them; it is the SDA interpretation that fostered anti-Catholicism just as anti-Semitism began with early Christianity.

Patti Grant
Reply
a day ago

I just finished reading both of the excellent articles linked above and my overwhelming sense is one of sadness and loss at the current and ongoing state of the church regarding WO. It is nothing less than tragedy that we are forced repeatedly through these convulsions of anger, bitterness and dogmatism because of the stiff-necked refusal of tiny men to recognize the equality of all believers. This 130-year argument could be but a distant memory if we had only followed the example set by the Council of Jerusalem. No one is forced to ordain women, no one is forbidden to ordain women. What a wicked diversion of energy from the good news of Salvation. And more damage to the Body of Christ will reverberate throughout the church because of the threats of "dire consequences" to those who dare to follow their consciences instead of the party line. I am appalled.

Truth Seeker
Reply
a day ago

Patti: "It is nothing less than tragedy that we are forced repeatedly through these convulsions of anger, bitterness and dogmatism because of the stiff-necked refusal of tiny men to recognize the equality of all believers."

Not even remotely related to equality; that is a worldly feminist concept with regard to WO. Male spiritual headship is the issue as portrayed throughout Scriptures as well as enjoined by the Bible. Damage to the Body of Christ is exemplified in the rebellion to properly constituted authority.
Actually, quite a number of SDA theologians, including those who are otherwise conservative, do not see 'male headship' as applying in the church in the NT or today. That may be why the decision has been taken out of the hands of theologians at Andrews and placed into the hands of the BRI and its branches at the divisions. I think the administrators learnt long ago that they cannot rely on the theologians to come up with the 'right' answers. I am not sure what happens if the consensus turns out to be the same as all previous studies.

Elaine Nelson

Why not have an all-male church then there would be no conflict about who should be ordained?

Calling it a "worldly feminist concept" has no relevance. It is a Roman concept that only men should be church leaders. The Roman Catholic church adopted the Roman government structure which had been kept alive since pagan times.

Of course, women have always played important parts in all religions and had enormous influence: the Oracle of Delphi; the Greek and Roman goddesses. The virgin birth first appeared in both Greek and Roman religions; it is not an original concept in Christianity and took many decades before it eventually became a Christian idea.

Stephen Ferguson

Perhaps like Muslims in Saudi Arabia, who aren't even allowed to attend the Mosque but must pray or home. Or I beleive Hasidic Jews are wholly seperated, and just watch in the upstairs gallery the men in worship. It would simply make life easier for many of those posting here. Who knows, perhaps we should run it past Pres Ted.

Steve Tanner

Just a thought and looking for feedback. I have seen women speakers in America and also in another country. Some were very good but then there were others who dressed in a very attractive sexy way with out question. Yes I am a guy and they did look very good. Just thinking all this will go on if the door is opened wide for womens ordination. How would the guide lines for dress be set?

I post this question here because of letters I have recieved on this issue.

Kevin Riley

Do you object to the men who dress well and attract the attention of women? How are the guidelines for dress set for men? And, the quesiton at issue is not women preaching, or working as pastors, but the credentials they receive. Should the unions back down and things stay as they are, the same women will be up the front preaching. As will the women elders, deacons, song leaders, musicians, singers, etc doing what they do. Not to
mention the good looking women in the pews or in the foyer between SS and church. Choosing not to ordain women will not solve this problem.

Patti Grant
Reply
about 20 hours ago

Steve, I can appreciate your concern that "all this will go on if the door is opened wide for womens ordination." It is my experience that the problem of how any man looks at any woman is already an issue, on the podium or off. We live in a world that is saturated with images of sexy-looking women wearing clothing specifically designed to elicit a sexual response from men. It cannot be easy for men. But if a woman dresses modestly in line with Biblical principles she is acceptable to God. I would respectfully respond that it is each individual man's responsibility to control his own thoughts as he looks at a woman. Each woman has the responsibility to dress modestly so as to not provoke. A "dress policy" will not answer this question. Only you can thoughtfully harness your own thoughts in response. The Holy Spirit will strengthen you. Thank you for raising a valid question with which many men struggle.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
about 19 hours ago

In Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan, women are beaten for exposing their ankles. Lust is in the heart and men have always blamed women for their own lustful thoughts. I have yet to see a woman in the pulpit not decently dressed. If she wears a dress it could be too tight or short; if she wears pants it would be "unladylike"--it's a no-win situation.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 10 hours ago

This is also cultural. In many cultures, neither legs nor breasts are considered to be sexually arousing. So having dresses with slits in them almost to the thigh, or women exposing their breasts, in no way distracts a man. Even in cultures where no clothes were habitually worn had standards of decency for men and women. In Australian Aboriginal culture clothes were optional, and only usually worn if it was cold, but boys and girls were taught to be modest. Our missionaries have tended to impose western ideals of modesty - perhaps for their own protection. It does take time to not notice women breastfeeding their babies in the front row of church, even if it doesn't affect you sexually, so I can imagine a naked (but very modest) congregation could be distracting to a preacher.

Steve Tanner
Reply
a day ago

These are all good thoughts. I appreciate them and feel these issues need to be addressed. Another thought I have is what is wrong with husband wife teams working together in ministry? I have seen this and like it. After all didn't Jesus recommend sending two by two?

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 10 hours ago
What if the wife (or husband) is not called to ministry?

J. David Newman
Reply
about 21 hours ago

It seems that Patti is the only who, besides myself, who has read the articles posted. At least no one else is comenting on them. I had hoped that there could be a real discussion about what those articles said. We know our own opinions but those articles would help the church forward if everyone would read them and see how much they are in agreement.

Patti Grant
Reply
about 17 hours ago

Thank you, David. I too feel that these wonderful articles shine bright light into many dark chasms and can soothe anxieties on both sides of the instant issue. Andrew Bates shows us how to do that without violating one's conscience. In The Use and Abuse of Authority he begins by noting that "When people end up in charge, they are easily tempted to demand obedience from others." I shake my head in disbelief remembering how Ted Wilson asks church members to subvert personal conscience in the service of a mythical unity that he himself cannot even define. Conscience is the voice of the Holy Spirit, and surrendering my conscience to any human being is not safe. I simply cannot fathom being asked to do that by any godly leader.

Bates goes on to cite EGW's statements about leadership: "For clarity's sake we may contrast two extremes: 'Demonic' authority is anchored in the coercive use of power. Its goal is self-preservation. It appeals to fear and ultimately resorts to violence to gain its ends. In contrast, 'Divine' authority is anchored first in the prosperity of true goodness, that is, using power only insupport of goodness. Its goal is reciprocal love. It appeals to joy and seeks to win through a demonstration of goodness rather than through corection by a show of force." What a stunning contrast. I strongly encourage everyone to read and refresh your spirits. There is a way out of this mess. What a shame these articles were not accepted 10 years ago and 17 years ago, respectively.

Ralph Seland
Reply
about 14 hours ago

I read the two articles thoroughly. One point that Andrew Bates made in number 6 of the second article stood out. He wrote: "Peter, taking the floor after "much discussion" (verse 7, NIV), did no exegesis of Scripture. He simply told the story of how God had demonstrated the equality of Jew and Gentile, . . ."

It was demonstration and not exegesis that brought a decision.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 10 hours ago

I read the articles. They are saying nothing new. Church politics often gets in the way of common sense.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
An ideal solution was reached nearly 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. For all those who continue quoting the Bible, why is this not the best model: allow each group to do what is best for winning new converts, whether Jews or Greeks. This destroys the idea of world wide uniformity that forces everyone, no matter the culture, to march to the same drummer.

Joe Erwin

Lysistrata used the mother of all strategies. Why not try that one ladies?

Kevin Riley

Could it be done while being 'submissive'?

Anonymous
Adventist Small Business Group, ASI Annual Convention Convenes This Week in Cincinnati

Submitted: Aug 6, 2012
By AT News Team

It was once known as the association of “self-supporting institutions,” schools and other ministries which the Seventh-day Adventist denomination does not control and for which it takes no financial responsibility. It has become “ASI,” the Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries group, an association of “supporting ministries” or independent nonprofit organizations that are loyal to the denomination and small businesses.

Its annual convention attracts up to 3,300 people each year and its exhibition hall is noted for demonstrating the wide variety of causes and concepts that Adventists in North America are involved with. The 2012 event is in Cincinnati’s Duke Energy Convention Center and runs this week, August 8 through 11.

Last year Elder Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, preached on Sabbath morning at the convention. This year’s speakers include Shawn Boonstra, evangelism coordinator for the Adventist Church in North America, and John Bradshaw, director of the It Is Written television ministry. The other speakers are not denominational employees—Dr. Neil Nedley, president of Weimar Health and Education Center; Frank Fournier, president of Eden Valley Institute; Steve Wohlbberg of White Horse Media; Chad Kreuzer of Anchor Point Films; and Steven Grabiner, president of Outpost Centers International. No women are among the announced preachers.

A major activity at these annual gatherings is a large offering which is distributed among projects submitted by various independent ministries, all members of ASI. Last year the offering totaled $2.1 million, according to the organization. Several members told Adventist Today there are hopes of an even larger offering this year.

Although ASI is open to Adventists across the board, requiring only that a local pastor sign off on the membership application, it is widely known for attracting a more conservative mindset. For example, the most widely known member organization is the independent television network, Three Angels Broadcasting. It will broadcast live coverage of the convention each evening from 7 to 9 p.m. (Eastern Time), Wednesday through Friday; and much of the day on Saturday, August 11. The signal is available on the Web, as well as by satellite and a few local cable channels.

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Share your thoughts about this article:
10 comments
SecondOpinion
Reply
3 days ago
I received a "Special ASI Issue" of the Adventist Review in the mail. Why? Why a special issue of our church's official paper for this group and not others? No "Special Spectrum Issue" or "Special One Project Issue"? Go ahead and print up a few thousand for the convention, but why send a copy to my door?

Kevin Riley
Reply
3 days ago
Because ASI is in the 'specially anointed' category because it ticks all the boxes important to church leaders. The other groups are somewhat deficient in their box ticking.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
3 days ago
I applaud what ASI is doing, but it seems to be an organization for the wealthier SDA's among us. I've been asked why I don't go to their meetings. I have a business to run, and no one to do my job when I'm gone. I also don't have the disposable income that it takes to be jetting across the country to these conventions. I'd rather pay my employees more and contribute the surplus to missions and other worthwhile church projects.

Margarita Merriman

Reply
2 days ago

Margarita Merriman

Reply
2 days ago

Last night I watched the ASI panel on 3ABN where Elder Ted Wilson made an impassioned appeal for unity. Danny Shelton asked for the distinction between unity and uniformity. It was suggested that unity is a principle or state of mind whereas uniformity involves action. I believe the church can have unity without uniformity in the matter of gender neutral ordination. We do not insist on uniformity of worship styles throughout the world, or even in the USA. Each congregation seeks to meet the needs of its members. Couldn't we grant unions the same latitude?

I was sorry that 3ABN and ASI used this forum to air our dirty linen.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
2 days ago

Granting the unions the same latitude makes too much sense for it to be adopted ;-)

Ella M

Reply
2 days ago

I think it is unfortunate that ASI has the reputation of being ultraconservative as opposed to being more moderate and open to new ideas in evangelism, for these are the people who can help spread the Gospel of Christ's soon coming. However, because of their wealth some of them may be tempted to hold hostage the Gospel with only their approved kinds of evangelism. I have heard that some do this. If so, they will be held responsible in the judgement.

This reputation also closes the door to others who could be supporters. I am sorry they tend to hold only to one side of any issue and thus don't represent the whole church.

On the other side, those who may side with the more moderate/liberal/evangelical approach in the church need to recognize the good these organizations do and not categorize them. I hold Weimar Institute and some other similar organizations in high regard as they try to do what Western medicine has primarily failed to do. In the hands of a balanced leadership they have a great work to do for Christ in our society.

Truth Seeker

Reply
a day ago

I once went to an ASI regional(?) meeting and found it very enjoyable and not at all stuffy.

Lynn Baerg

Reply
a day ago

Edwin A. Schwisow

Reply
about 19 hours ago

ASI may have a tendency to be fiscally and doctrinally conservative, but there also is a strong populist aversion in ASI toward churchly "kingly power" and any initiative that would deprive independent church enterprise and local congregations of their rights to self-determination. 3ABN itself has been highly jealous of its own independence from Silver Spring.

Ordination in the world church is highly subjective, and ASI members realize from their world travels that in some countries, men are ordained who are barely literate but have a gift for preaching and pastoring; in other parts of the world, extensive post-graduate training is recommended and generally required. Yes, gender is at issue here, but in the good ASI thinking I have seen, too much dictation to local fields and ministries from top-down is viewed with grave suspicion. In fact, ASI itself may be a fitting metaphor for those who wish to be "united" in purpose, but highly diversified in the ways they go about achieving those goals.

Anonymous

Posting as James White Periodical Lib - 1 Andrews University Subscribe to comments □
Newsweek Declares Pacific Union College Most Beautiful College Campus in America

Submitted: Aug 9, 2012
By AT News Team

Last weekend, Newsweek and its online edition, the Daily Beast, published a list of the most beautiful college campuses in America and named Pacific Union College (PUC), a Seventh-day Adventist school, at the top of the list. The list was created from information about the actual physical attractiveness of the campus, the friendliness of the students and the local climate.

Located on the top of Howell Mountain, looking down on the picturesque Napa Valley, in northern California, the PUC campus is well known among lifelong Adventists for its rural setting and natural beauty. Ellen White spent the last years of her life from the turn of the 20th century to her death in 1915 living nearby and her home, Elmshaven, is preserved as a historical site.

The listing "is recognition of our collective goal to make the campus sparkle—and our landscape and facilities management teams in particular," said the college president, Dr. Heather J. Knight. "This inspires all of us in every area of our campus community to keep working even harder to make PUC a state-of-the-art learning environment characterized by a God-given gorgeous and pristine setting.”

The campus has long had many faculty and students interested in environmental issues, outdoor activities and wilderness areas. Some of the first books published by Adventists on nature study, camping and hiking were written by faculty members at PUC. “This is not surprising,” one alum told Adventist Today. “It has long been part of the character of this institution.”

They are so right! It was heaven on earth for a freshman from Southern California.

Jean Corbeau

As a graduate of PUC, and long time resident of Napa County (1950-1973, and then off and on until 1979), I would be expected to whole-heartedly agree with that assessment. I'm not sure what their criteria were. Its rural location is its number one asset, in my opinion. But I would think that University of New England, in Biddeford, ME, would be right up there, along with Hombolt State University in California. The University of Maine at Fort Kent isn't bad, either. It's even more rural than PUC. I'm also surprised that one of the
Universities in Vermont or New Hampshire didn't get it.

Cindy Tutsch
Reply
2 days ago

Delighted to hear of this recognition!

Can't help but wonder, though, how PUC's interest in the environment, outdoor activities, and wilderness fits in with their push to sell their property.

Joe Erwin
Reply
2 days ago

Yes, PUC has a lovely campus--I just visited there in June of this year. Jean is correct, though, that the campus of Humboldt State University in Arcata, is also exceptionally nice. I taught there from 1978-82, and especially enjoyed the area and the campus. I am biased, though, having grown up in Humboldt County. The vineyards around the PUC campus certainly do not detract from its beauty, but it is a sad waste to not have a great department of enology and viticulture there. Anyway, it is pretty cool for PUC to receive this recognition.

David Langworthy
Reply
2 days ago

:-)
Regarding the wished for future thriving Dept of Enology, I would highly recommend maintaining aerobic metabolism via adequate pulmonic ventilation while you wait.*

*don't hold your breath ;)

Doctorf
Reply
2 days ago

My wife and I stopped off at PUC last December when we were up visiting the wine country for a week. The last time I was at PUC was in 1977. Indeed it is one beautiful campus.

angwinresident
Reply
a day ago

I have been a resident of Angwin since 1988 and have always loved the PUC campus. The problem in the last five years has been to convince PUC administrators and Board of the beauty and value of what they have. They have been working at destroying the beauty of the campus and the community with a development of 200 or more homes and a shopping mall as the "grand entrance" to the college! Not only that, they plan to sell off the most unspoiled areas of the campus as vineyard estates. This is extremely short-sighted. These lands are what make the campus beautiful and what draw students - and Newsweek magazine's attention!

Jean Corbeau
As a former resident of Angwin, I agree with you. This is very short-sighted. But it is typical of Adventist institutions which have departed from inspired counsel (can we all say A U C?). It can be the beginning of a downward spiral, and I assume that PUC wants to avoid the fate of its sister on the right coast.

Joe Erwin

A problem is presented, of course, by the attractiveness of the area for development as vineyards and the contrast in financial value between developing in that way and not developing. This is similar to the problem in other areas, maybe especially in California, that led to commercial/residential development of what had been agricultural land. One could do much worse, in terms of scenic beauty, than conversion of some land to vineyards—but conversion of wildlife habitat to agricultural use is a global conservation problem.

Anonymous
Voluntary Unity in Christ or Forced Unity by Dictation?

Submitted: Aug 9, 2012
By Ervin Taylor

An article posted on line on August 7, 2012, ahead of publication in the Adventist Review carried the headline, “Church Leaders Issue ‘An Appeal for Oneness in Christ.’”

This “appeal” was clearly stated to be in response to the recent action of the Columbia Union Conference stating that ordination to the gospel ministry in that union would no longer be based on gender. The “Leaders” were identified as “World church executives and . . . 13 division presidents.”

In part, the “appeal” stated that the CUC action was “not in harmony with General Conference Working Policy.” It was considered “a serious threat to the unity of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church.” It further stated that the CUC had engaged in “unilateralism” in that the CUC action “sets aside the 1990 and 1995 decisions of the General Conference in Session respecting the practice of ordination.”

Finally, earlier statements of Ted Wilson as well as the wording of the “appeal” carried a clear threat. Previous statements warned of “serious consequences.” In this case, there was a statement that “at its next meeting in October 2012, the General Conference Executive Committee will carefully review the situation and determine how to respond.”

The most egregious part of this “appeal” is in its citation of a prayer of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John: “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are” which was followed by “the unity among disciples for Jesus prayed is a precious gift of God.”

Commentary

I wonder if this blogger is the only one who views quoting the prayer of Jesus in this statement issued by Adventist “world church executives” as bordering on the blasphemous. Citing the authority of Jesus and the Bible in the furtherance of maintaining their control of the reins of centralized power in the Adventist Church is eerily reminiscent of a strategy used some 500 years ago by another set of leaders of a world church. Captive theological apologists supporting the power of the 16th Century Roman Papacy in their rebuttals of Marin Luther’s condemnation of Papal indulgences used phrases such as “Unity of the Faith” and “Oneness in Christ” as counter arguments. In this case, it would appear that the only substantive difference between the wording used in 16th Century Papal Bulls and other church pronouncements and this declaration of Adventist “world church executives” is that the 16th century ones were written in Latin while the 21st century one was written in English.

The Pacific Union Conference now has an opportunity to send another clear message to Silver Spring, the Adventist Vatican. We will follow our consciences and Biblical principles in this matter, not the dictates of an earthly church hierarchy, no matter what kinds of threats are made. We can do no other. So help us God!

cb25

Reply
3 days ago
It looks like the hierarchy are hell bent on agitating the issue to the point that predictions of major splits become self fullfilling prophecies....And all because they cannot give womon true equality?!

If they accept the authority of the Bible on this issue, especially the NT Jesus' message, the Gospel is beyond doubt a message of equality of men and women. It goes without saying: Unity is not Equality. That church of 500 yrs ago was very united whilst being totally discriminatory. (Did I hear someone say "united in truth"? mmm what is truth? - they thought they had it!)

Of course this is not how the hierarchy see the issue. To such the doctrine against WO is clear.

Dr Taylor, I'm glad you made the connection between this/our church and that of 500 yrs ago. They speak of consequences! I am equally glad we don't live in a day and age where floggings, burnings, rackings and the like are options when they are trying to dream up consequences! Human nature has not really changed much in the passing of years. Power and opportunity would probably yeild the same results if the culture permitted.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

If unity was all important, we would still all belong to the Roman Catholic Church!

Elaine Nelson
Reply
3 days ago

What an irony! All 13 division presidents discussing women's ordination with not one woman among them!

Since the world began it has always been men who decided women's role, and it was limited to kinder, kirche and kuchen. Like mothers deciding whether their small children can go out and play with the neighbor children.

Only when women refuse to allow a group of men to decide what their roles in the church should be, will this be changed. And women have always found methods to achieve their goals. Even Lysistrata had a plan

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

I wonder what they would do if a certain little woman was still around, who wasn't afraid to take these men in power on? The greatest irony is some of these men opposing women no doubt do so relying on this certain little woman! What a funny bunch we are?

Bea
Reply
3 days ago

I have felt the church was headed for some kind of a demise but never once did I believe WO would take center stage. Not that I don't believe WO is important, I wouldn't have guessed it would have caused such chaos. Actually, I really thought it was a "no brainer" - in this century to take a stand against WO seems outrageous. The right wing has threatened to split from the church because of this issue and the GC en masse have sent a serious letter hoping the PUC doesn't make the same terrible mistake as CUC did a few days ago. The AT blogs
are buzzing with activity! Such vitriol, threats, innuendos. Great Dr. Taylor, for you to seek history to compare what happened to a church 500 years ago and recognize similarities with the SDA church's situation today and to encourage dialog. Ted Wilson's leadership may have worked 100 years ago - but I'm afraid it's not effective today. PUC will vote for WO. After waiting 131 years you would think we could expect a flawless power point presentation celebrating Women's Ordination and thus elevating the church to a civilized as well as spiritual entity.

Bea
Reply
2 days ago

Dr. Taylor - The joke is on me. When I made my comment I was not aware of the blog re: Ted and Ben. Consequently, I did not realize you were talking about the current Ben. Excellent comparison. I laughed at my ignorance.

William Noel
Reply
3 days ago

Because the leadership of the world church is dominated by men and the divisions outside North America are a large majority at any General Conference session, it seems only a miracle will prevent a vote against the ordination of women in 2015. My concern is about what the GC Committee might do between then and now to penalize any division or union permitting the ordination of women. Such opposition is clear evidence of church leaders not following either scripture or the guidance of the Holy Spirit and discounting the ability of God to speak through His people instead of exclusively through elected leaders.

Bea
Reply
2 days ago

I totally agree with you William Noel. We don't have to go too far back to R Folk........era to know the carnage that can be done by the leader of GC. A decade before he was given that lofty position my husband and I did not only feel the sharpness of his sword, he assisted in slicing and dicing us much as he later did with David Dennis. Needless to say, we were not surprised when he fell from grace. Oftentimes these men are promoted. I've had my concerns with TW from the beginning - it's sort of a 6th sense (ex. I have interviewed hundreds of people prior to surgery and became pretty accurate in guessing who smoked just by looking at them). We will see how he (TW) handles this delicate situation. It looks a no-win situation all around.

Joe Erwin
Reply
3 days ago

It seems to me that Christians of good will should discard the abomination of divisiveness that seems to have always afflicted Christianity and all other human organizations. Dogmatic doctrinal division into diverse denominations suggests that the entire movement lacks validity. Those who insist on controlling the minds and behavior of others should be discarded and left behind by those who are willing to focus on the message of Jesus and live their lives accordingly.

History ain't what it used to be
Dr. Ervin's comparison to the RC churches' response to Luther seems to be an apt comparison. It seems that if the archival records of more recent church history were uncovered (c. mid-19th century) we may stumble across a similar document that looks eerily reminiscent of the current appeal. It may read something like this (apologies to writers of documentation that may appear similar in nature. Any similarities are merely coincidental:)

We are AGHAST! - Advocating God’s Honorable And Sacred Tenets – and therefore feel we must jointly issue
An Appeal For Unity in Respect to New-fangled doctrines that seem to be infiltrating the various churches at the present time (c. 1844)

Since the beginning of the 1840’s several church bodies have recorded actions amongst its members expressing support for, or commitment to, the soon-coming of Christ also known in some circles as the second advent. The various churches are currently engaged in a study of the theology of the second coming and its implications for the members.

In the light of this current study and the actions of several churches, the officers of the various church bodies including presidents of these same church bodies, have unanimously communicated an appeal for unity in respect to a biblical understanding of the second advent. The appeal calls: 1) for unity in response to the new light or Present Truth, as some call it, i.e. the 1843 and 1844 Sessions reviewing the second advent theology; 2) for each church body to carefully review the far-reaching effects of pursuing a course of action that is contrary to the decisions of the united body of churches; and 3) for each church body to participate in the current study about the theology of the second advent. We recognize that a variety of studies regarding this topic have been going on for nearly the last two millennia, but we are convinced that if we encourage more study, we will surely achieve the aforementioned yet elusive unity so desperately longed for but not yet achieved.

1. Respecting the long-held (and obviously accurate) opinion of the various churches
The various churches impacted by this theology of the second advent (new light considered by some) recognizes that the leadership of the churches representing the common community of believers is the highest authority and most appropriate body to decide which doctrines or biblical and which are not.

As currently understood by the various churches, the belief in the second advent, as espoused by Miller, et al, does not reflect accurate biblical teaching. As well, no provision exists for a geographically localized acceptance of this belief.

For any church to introduce a different theology on the second advent is seen, by the rest of the various churches, as readiness to set aside a common decision made by the leadership of the various churches and proceed in another direction.

2. The effects of unilaterally pursuing a different course of action
The significance of any of the various churches proceeding in a manner contrary to a global decision of the various churches is not limited to the specific action involved (adoption of a Millerite belief in the second advent in the present instance); it touches the very heart of how the various churches function as an ecclesiastical family.
Unless the important value (i.e. collective decision-making and the acceptance of those decisions as the authority of the Church) is maintained, all other values that contribute to unity are seriously weakened. We recognize and hold firmly to the belief that if one stone is removed from the foundation of the building and replaced with a less desirable stone, the entire structure will collapse upon itself.

3. Participation in the current study of the second advent and its implications

Biblical research committees in all parts of civilized America have been asked to conduct a study on the theology of the second advent and its implications. In addition, during 1843, the general administrative committees will appoint a Theology of the Second Advent Study Committee, with representation from all of the various churches, to oversee and facilitate the discussion process and to prepare reports for presentation to the general council of the various churches. The annual council in 1844 will determine what action, if any, should be recommended to the 1845 general sessions of the various churches (assuming Miller is wrong).

The appeal sent by the various churches officers to certain churches also reflects the leadership group’s message to other renegade churches that may be considering similar steps with respect to the adoption of a new theology regarding the second advent.

“We therefore earnestly appeal to you:
1. That the all the various church bodies continue to operate in harmony with the global decisions and global decision-making processes of these same church bodies.
2. That until such time as the various church bodies decide otherwise, renegade individuals and/or churches refrain from taking any action to implement second advent preaching that is contrary to the 1834 and 1841 General Sessions of the various churches along with their representative actions.
3. That the membership of the various churches be informed concerning the implications for the various church bodies in the event that one entity, for whatever reason, chooses a course of action in deliberate opposition to a decision of the various church bodies.
4. That the various church bodies actively participate in the global discussion about the common understanding of the second advent. The contributions of the various church bodies in this discussion can be forwarded to the Theology of the Second Advent Study Committee through the respective church bodies Study Committee set up for this purpose.

Note to all members of the various church bodies: This appeal is of vital importance as we have recently come to observe that not only are the views of the Millerites infiltrating our various churches but a new notion that Sunday may not be the Sabbath has been emerging in a few of the churches as well, with the assertion that the old Jewish Sabbath – Saturday – be reinstated as the true Sabbath. This is further impetus to ensure that we maintain a unified position against these heterodox positions. After all, what could happen if people starting believing heresy’s such as these? We must guard ourselves from the slippery slope that has dangerous and unforeseen consequences. The next you know, in a century or two, this emerging movement could grow to be numbered in the several millions. With this in mind, please do all you can do to maintain the united front against new and strange doctrines.

1. A variety of Christian mainstream churches made up of Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, Baptist, etc.
2. A group of 40 officers from the various church bodies which are involved in this in-depth study and which include officers from the President, Secretariat and Treasury offices of the sundry church bodies plus the Presidents of those bodies who, in additional to being Presidents of their churches are also vice-presidents of AGHAST.
3. Information that a number of churches have adopted Millers theology wholesale give rise to the belief that general acceptance elsewhere is appropriate and should proceed in a similar manner. It has been alleged that some of the various churches have therefore established a precedent for adopting the Millerite doctrines. However, these theologies were not authorized or conducted according to the policies of the various churches. Nor are these theologies approved or recognized/endorsed by various levels of leadership in the various churches at various levels of leadership he the belief that general acceptances not reflect accurate biblical teaching.I'll come to a doc.

Ervin Taylor
Reply
2 days ago

May I congratulate "History Ain't What It Used To Be" for his "discovery" of this highly creative "historical" document. On a serious note, I suspect that something similar to this could actually be found in some dusty archive of an appropriate 19th American mainline church body if someone had the time to do a detailed search.

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

WO? What's the fuss, really. Let's talk about MO (Men's Ordination) for a minute, shall we. Where in the 66 books of the Bible do we see men being ordained as PASTORS? If anyone can give me that one text, just one, I will be eternally grateful to you. Thanks.

All4Him
Reply
a day ago

So Acts 6:6 was a fluke? Are there not a list of "men" in Acts 6:5?

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

Which version are you reading from AllforHim. All Bible versions I know of, in any language, including the original, speak of men of good repute etc, who were appointed to serve tables because the Hellenists were complaining that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. They chose seven and the apostles laid their hands on them as they prayed for them. The result was phenomenal. The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Conclusions: 1. The passage you quoted has absolutely and clearly nothing to do with the ordaining of male pastors. 2. If you want your church to grow phenomenally, ordain men to serve tables, so widows will not get neglected, and have their need for bread met daily. Our problem with decades of "fight" in the church to the very top of GC leadership is that we try to defend two church traditions/policies (ordination of men and commissioning of women) as if they were the commands of God and we add insult to injury by wanting to stretch the traditions/policies further by pushing for WO. Let's heed the very serious and solemn warning by John the Apostle: " I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book (the Bible): if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book..." (Revelation 21:18).
Was Steven stoned for serving tables? Read Acts 6:7 and Acts 6:8 again.
Look at Christ own example He chose 11 apostles that were men and one chose himself and when they replaced Judas a man was choosen.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:7 (KJV) Whereunto I am ORDAINED a preacher and goes on into chapter three where he writes...

This is a true saying, if a MAN desire the office of a bishop HE disireh a good work. A bishop then must be blameless HUSBAND of one wife....1 Timothy 3: 1,2

GWP How do you interpret the following quotes from EGW that she wrote.....

The primary object of our college was to **afford young men an opportunity to study for the ministry** and to prepare young persons of both sexes to become workers in the various branches of the cause. 5T page 60. **Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women who walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be men of blameless reputation.** 5T page 598

These two quote are not flukes for they fit in with the rest of her writings.....

There is an urgent demand for laborers in the gospel field. **Young men** are needed for this work; God calls for them. Their education is of **primary importance in our colleges**, and in no case should it be ignored or regarded as a secondary matter. It is entirely wrong for teachers, by suggesting other occupations, to **discourage young men who might be qualified to do acceptable work in the ministry**. Those who present hindrances to prevent young men from fitting themselves for this work are counterworking the plans of God, and they will have to give an account of their course. There is among us **more than an average of men of ability**. If their capabilities were brought into use, we should have **twenty ministers where we now have one.** **Young men who design to enter the ministry** should not spend a number of years solely in obtaining an education. Teachers should be able to comprehend the situation and to adapt their instruction to the wants of this class, and special advantages should be given them for a brief yet comprehensive study of the branches most needed to fit them for their work. But this plan has not been followed. Too little attention has been given to the **young men for the ministry.** We have not many years to work, and teachers should be imbued with the Spirit of God and work in harmony with His revealed will, instead of carrying out their own plans. We **are losing much every year because we do not heed the counsel of the Lord on these points.** Testimony Treasures Volume 2, Page 416

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

Is it really necessary to conduct this conversation in stereo? You know what answers you will be given, as they have been given before. Perhaps there is no consensus on this issue for a reason - and it isn't that one side is listening to God and the other isn't.

All4Him
Reply
about 17 hours ago

Kevin I added the TT quote to the 5T quotes to show that Ellen White was consistant with what she said. She was in consensus with the Bible on this matter.
Kevin Riley  
Reply  
about 11 hours ago

I was referring to identical posts on more than one thread. I think we all agree that Ellen White is essentially in consensus with the Bible. We disagree over what both mean by what they say.

Ervin Taylor  
Reply  
about 22 hours ago

That's what I like about the Adventist Today forums. It reflects the whole spectrum of Adventist thinking at the grass roots. "AllForHim" (Isn't a shame he/she will not reveal his/her real name?) quoting EGW to solve every problem reflects what I suspect a large segment of the Adventist laity have been taught to do. That many no longer think that works or is relevant must be quite frustrating to our conservative church members. The rest of us need to be tolerant and help these people see the error of their ways. :) (Sorry, I coult not resist saying that.)

Jean Corbeau  
Reply  
about 21 hours ago

Have you considered that those of us who believe as AllForHim does, may be taking the same position as you are suggesting: being tolerant and trying to help you and your colleagues see the error of your ways. I'm afraid there is a "great gulf fixed" between us, which will never be bridged until we see Him coming in the clouds. Then some eyes will be opened. Just whose eyes those are remains to be seen.

It also remains to be see how relevant the writings of Ellen White will be in the future. I would not bet against them. They have not failed us yet, protestations by "progressives" to the contrary notwithstanding.

Kevin Riley  
Reply  
about 10 hours ago

The question is, how to get along until then while not making others compromise their sincerely held beliefs.

Once you accept that Ellen White is inspired, you can no more ignore her than the Bible, but it is obvious that both Ellen White and the Bible can be read in more than one way. For years we argued over the human nature of Christ (a bigger issue that WO), and there were various committees set to study the issue. Both sides were of course sure their arguments were better and more fully reflected all that Bible had to say. In the end, the GC declared that there were Bible verses that supported each side, and, obviously, other verses that argued against each side. So the conclusion was that the Bible was not clear, and both positions could be held, and no more time would be given at GC sessions to arguing the issue, nor would the GC sponsor any more studies into the issue. Unless someone comes up with 'new light', that is where we stand. We continue to argue, but it is no longer a divisive issue for the world church. I believe that a good argument can be made that the WO issue is the same, and unless the new study comes up with something new that makes a decisive conclusion possible, we should treat this the same way. Allow churches that want a woman pastor to have one (or more), while not imposing them on churches that do not. Much like we did with women elders nearly 40 years ago.

Bea
Reply
about 21 hours ago

How do we mix oil and water? How do we compromise? Those of us who are pro-WO desire equality. Is there such an animal as half-equality? Was there such a thing as half-slavery? There are no half measures in some instances (equality is equality). For those who are anti-WO, we go round and round like a dog chasing its tail with scripture upon scripture. What complicates here is that there may be several interpretations of that scripture. Those who are against WO believe women should be submissive, they may speak in the pulpit, but should not be ordained - it is not God's will.

Up to this point the church has been anti-equality as to women's rights. Our GC president has verbally and given written notice of reprimand in not submitting to the status quo. Appalling and not in tune with true leadership. Embracing inequality is something I believe this church should not be proud of - in fact should be ashamed of. The golden rule is of paramount importance and should be applied to this issue. We wax eloquently about OT laws.....and are unable to become saturated with the beautiful yet simple "Do unto others as you would have them do to you". Let us follow our hearts to equality.

All4Him
Reply
about 17 hours ago

Bea we don't. Male and Females were created equal with different roles. To answer half of Erwin Taylors question (I could not at any point in my lifetime bear a child). God made these different roles so we would be able to serve each other better as a family unit.

Bea you are on to something. Oil and water are both important. If you take either out of our churches engine it can't run for long!!! If you find the two all mixed together you have a blown head gasket and the days are numbered on the engine.

There are Godly wives and mothers, that without their influence men could not lead out in the Home or the church.

Joe Erwin
Reply
about 16 hours ago

J - O - E      E - R - W - I - N

There is no compromise on spelling (although my last name came from Irvine, and Erv's may have come from Erwin).

All4Him
Reply
Sorry your so sensitive and I will try to spell better E R V I N... You know how it is will these grumpy old men they have bad eyesight too:)

Did I write wifes right? Shucks I should have capitalized church and not Home also... (I am sure there are a few others.....

Joe Erwin

Reply

about 16 hours ago

Sorry to be offensive. And grumpy. No apologies for being old.

Ervin Taylor

Reply

about 17 hours ago

Hmm. Do I understand Mr. "All4Him"'s answer to Bea's question: How do we compromise? as being "We don't." And there is one of the big problems. Conservaties are so sure they know the mind of God that to compromise would be the same as saying that God is wrong since God knows the Truth and conservatives know what God thinks and therefore conservatives know the Truth and how can you compromise the Truth.

Interesting situation.

All4Him

Reply

about 17 hours ago

Would you want to compromise your engine by water in your crankcase or oil in your radiator? Yet both are equally important to the running of your engine.

The reason I don't use my name is: that it is not about me it is about what Gods Word. I don't know what God thinks yet I study what He has said....

Kevin Riley

Reply

about 11 hours ago

And so does virtually everyone involved in this discussion. You may disagree with those of us who believe women can be ordained, but we also came to our conclusions by studying the Bible. This is a dispute over how to interpret the Bible and put it into practice. If we didn't accept the Bible as an authority we wouldn't put so much effort into trying to understand it. To say we have come to the wrong conclusion is your right, to argue we ignore the Bible when we clearly don't is not.

Kimberlee Green

Reply

5 minutes ago
For many of us here to reveal your name is to say that you are completely honest about what you say and that you publicly acknowledge it. However some do have legitimate reasons (job) for not doing so.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
about 16 hours ago

All4Him,

Do you live in the PUC? If so, the latest Recorder should answer all your questions. If you disagree, argue with them, because they will do as they have planned, all objections notwithstanding.

And if you live outside the PUC, there is no reason to comment on the PUC situation. Take it up with your union, wherever it is.

Ervin Taylor
Reply
about 8 hours ago

Mr. "All4Him" and others who share his views might be interested that there were both pro-WO and con-WO articles in the Pacific Union Conference Recorder. The pro-WO article was not written by a liberal/progressive Adventist but by a member of the faculty of the SDA Seminary at Andrews who is, on essentially every other other topic, considered by anyone who knows anything about Adventist theology to be a very conservative, if not fundamentlist, Adventist theologian, and a card carrying member of the Adventist Theological Society. This issue is certainly creating some very strange combinations of those opposing and those supporing WO.

Joe Erwin
Reply
about 16 hours ago

It was not tithe that was withheld by Lysistrata and her colleagues. Why not try THAT tactic?

Bea
Reply
about 12 hours ago

Now that we know we don't want to ruin our engines, how do we deal with unity as strongly urged by our GC president. Maybe we need further dialog about unity/compromise and Lysistrata's approach.

William Noel
Reply
about an hour ago

Unity in what? The concepts held by certain church leaders? Or unity in the Holy Spirit? As for me and my house, we'll take the latter.

Anonymous

Posting as James White Periodical Lib - 1 Andrews University Subscribe to comments
I would like to conduct an informal and unscientific poll of readers of this blog.

Here is the poll question: “In light of what happened at the Columbia Union Conference session, would you recommend to Ted Wilson, the President of the General Conference of SDAs, that he speak to the delegates during the August 19, 2012 constituency session of the Pacific Union Conference?”

Before you indicate your vote, please reflect on what happened when he spoke to the union session delegates. He asked them to vote No on the question of whether the Columbia Union Conference should authorize ordination to the gospel ministry without regard to gender. The delegates proceeded to vote overwhelming Yes.

Therefore, if you are in favor of the Pacific Union Conference authorizing local conferences to ordain women, would it make sense for you to be also in favor of having Ted Wilson voice his opposition?

Alternatively, if you are not in favor of the Pacific Union Conference authorizing local conferences to ordain women, would it make sense for you to also be opposed to having Ted Wilson voice his opposition?

Please vote YES or NO in response to the following: “In light of what happened at the Columbia Union Conference session, would you recommend to Ted Wilson, the President of the General Conference of SDAs, that he personally speak to the delegates during upcoming Pacific Union Conference Session?” You are welcome to state the reason(s) for your vote.

Thank you for participating in this poll.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

Yes.

The respect for his office demands that he at least be invited, and the situation is sufficiently important that he should attend - even if people don't like what he has to say.

Given the 'damage has already been done' (regardless of whether you support WO or not), the best thing Pres Wilson could do is try and talk down the whole importance of all this now. He needs to make clear that this decision will have no impact on Unions outside the West who don't support WO.

The more he can talk done the issue, the greater it will keep the Church together. The most dangerous thing he can do is talk up the issue, with further talks of 'grave consequences' as he did last time. It is that sort of behaviour that will lead to schism; whereas, his principal job is to maintain unity.
Tapiwa Mushaninga
Reply
7 days ago

Yes

But I disagree with Stephen. It is time to make a stand for truth, to stand for principles. I do not believe for one second that those who will allow the non biblical practice will leave other unions alone but will continue to lobby and coerce other unions under the guise of "discrimination". Almost all WO proponents believe that not to have female pastors is discrimination, subjugation etc. yet they always say that this will not be forced on other peoples.

For me there is a disconnect if it is discrimination are proponents of WO saying discrimination is okay in other places? Then again if it is not discrimination then there was no need for WO in the first place. I still maintain that there is no biblical imperative for what is happening and many will find themselves guilty for apostasy. Besides if we look at other churches that introduced this practice did it help them or derail them. The SDA church was still the fastest growing in spite of this so why change a winning formula?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

It appears we agree he should talk.

It appears we disagree re what he should talk about.

It will be interesting to see what happens.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

"For me there is a disconnect if it is discrimination are proponents of WO saying discrimination is okay in other places?"

Slaves, obey your masters - or so said Paul. We live within the cultural reality of our societies. Just because Paul understood that slavery was a cultural reality of his day didn't mean he was an advocate of slavery.

Like on the issue of slavery in NT times, it is possible for Unions in the West to eliminate discrimination against women whilst understanding the cultural reality that abolishing discrimination in other parts of the world is not practicable at the moment. Similarly, in apartheid South Africa the SDA Church allowed segregation based on race, even though such an idea would be fiercely opposed as discrimination elsewhere in the world.

Moreover, doesn't the US still have segregated Conferences based on race - and where it is the African American community who desires this racial segregation? Just because the GC or NAD allows this form of discrimination in your part of the world doesn't mean it would be acceptable for 2 seconds in Europe or SPD (Australia and NZ). Perhaps President Wilson and the GC has a little less moral authority on the issue of WO given the World Church in effect allow racial discrimination, despite FB#14 and the clear teachings of Gal. 3:28?
Kevin Riley
Reply
7 days ago

Tapiwa

What other churches introduced was allowing women to be ministers. We did that over 100 years ago. All other churches, having decided women could be ministers allowed them to do so and ordained them; or decided women couldn't be ministers and did not allow them to do so. We are the only ones to argue women can be ministers, but can't be ordained as ministers. I would like you to list the Bible verses that support women being elders and pastors, while forbidding them being ordained. All I have seen quoted seem, if taken literally, to forbid women being elders and pastors while saying nothing about ordination.

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

Yes.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
7 days ago

Of course he should go and make an appeal to the PUC. Doing so will illustrate (as it did at CUC's "Rebellion of Korah" revival meeting) how far out of harmony with the rest of the church these people are.

Joe Erwin
Reply
7 days ago

Or how far out of harmony HE is with the people of the PUC....

cb25
Reply
7 days ago

NO. His divisive comments and stance demonstrated at the Columbia Union Conference disqualify him, demonstrating clearly that he is either not willing or not able to lead the Church in a theologically and practically balanced manner that is arguably required to meet the needs of a global Church.

A president that can pandy to theological conservatives and or power hungry male chauvinists has no place to speak nor lead. I never voted for someone to come in and lead this church back 60 years!

Jean Corbeau
Reply
6 days ago

Divisive comments? I think maybe the shoe was on the other foot. It's the rebellious unions which are being divisive in this. They are the ones going against church policy. Elder Wilson was simply appealing for unity.
"Unity" cuts both ways, don't you think?

Rudy Good
Reply
7 days ago

Don't think it is likely to effect the outcome very much. The vote at CU was about 80/20, perhaps it would have been 90/10 without his visit. I for one do not believe people voted yes because he said vote no (in my mind that would confirm Jean's rebellion theory). It may have made some who planned to vote yes, more determined in their vote, but that doesn't change the outcome.

I actually think that he should follow his conscience despite my suspicion that his conscience is poorly educated and influenced by his concept of how Adventism relates to the Body of Christ. My opinion is all based observation from afar so take it for what its worth.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

"I actually think that he should follow his conscience..."

That's a very honest answer Rudy and with much integrity.

Kevin Riley
Reply
7 days ago

I would hope everyone who speaks and/or votes will do likewise.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

Maybe, but it is complicated when that person is the President. Speaking one's personal mind in such a situation might not necessarily be the best. No one is saying Pres Wilson should suddenly support WO, because that is riddiculous. But no one is saying Pre Wilson should make 'grave warnings' like he did last time either. Presumably Wilson could still say his bit about his personal views but then say something that aims to maintain the unity of the Church.

Timo Onjukka
Reply
6 days ago

I do not believe Teds office confounds things. He has no purview in this meeting, and to try assert even his personal opinions in the Unions business is improper.

Is he man enough to stand back, and trust that God works through men (and women) like himself?
Somehow you can color me dubious....

Kevin Riley
Reply
6 days ago

The GC President can't say what his personal view is without it being confounded with the official GC view. That was one thing the last GC President was very clear on. No church official can give a personal view without at least some of his/her hearers considering it to be more than that. At a Union session the GC President really should stick to official statements. If there was clear evidence of GC policy being broken this session would not be happening. So all he really should do is point out that it is out of step with much of the world church and that there will be consequences of voting 'yes'.

The whole issue of 'rebellion' and 'apostasy' is simply hyperbole by those opposed to WO, but there will be real consequences in CUC and elsewhere if the session votes 'yes'. But let's not fool ourselves into thinking that a 'No' vote would be free of consequences either. Central to any speech should, I would think, be an appeal to consider wider issues and maintain as much unity as possible with the rest of NAD and the world field. I really doubt the appeal to wait longer will be accepted by the delegates. Waiting for the report on ordination will not solve this issue, as it deals with what ordination is, not with whether women can be ordained, which we have debated for decades. I suspect it will take many more decades before we can reach a consensus worldwide on that, so being asked to wait isn't realistic.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
6 days ago

I'm sure that Korah and his accomplices thought that the categorization of their actions as rebellion was also hyperbole. Didn't get them far, though. If defying the intent of the vote at a duly constituted GC session is not rebellion, I don't know what it is.

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
6 days ago

For an individual to assert categorically that the most giving (financially) and arguably most mission-attentive union on the face of the planet is "in rebellion" certainly must indicate that God has spoken to them in a special and unequivocal way (and I mean this literally). Based on the huge contributions the Pacific Union Conference has made to the world field, and its status as the final abode of the most admired woman the church has ever produced (Ellen G. White), perhaps it would be more appropriate to "be still and know that He is God." He will judge and He will reward, as we go about seeking to fine-tune our antennas to receive more bountifully of the Spirit's blessings.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

I wonder if the Judaizer-circumcision faction of the Early Church used the Korah insult against Paul and his radical notions that Gentiles need not be circumcised - in fact, that in Christ there is no male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free? As Protestants, we believe in the priesthood of all believers, not a Levitical Priesthood. Our ministers are not priests, unlike RCs, so the Korah analogy doesn't really fit.
Many who were there - even those who voted what you would consider the 'correct' way - have said the intent of the vote at both GCs was not to deny the ordination of women permanently. The votes were not to move ahead with ordination (at that time) and not to allow the Divisions to make their own decision. Neither vote stated that the SDA church believed ordaining women was wrong, neither addressed the issue of women working as pastors. Therefore neither the NGU nor CUC sessions were in rebellion. I still believe that the GC would have acted to stop the session if that were true, as they did when NAD tried to vote in that the president must be 'ordained/commissioned' instead of the voted GC position of 'ordained'. The GC may disapprove of the result, but that in itself is not 'rebellion'. It has to be clearly in breach of a GC policy or voted position to be 'rebellion'. Had the president of executive committee made the decision, that may have been different. But it was the church in session who voted the decision.

It would be more admirable and also humble if Ted didn't attend this meeting. His warning of "grave consequences" was totally out of place. If he had some specific punishments in mind, he should have mentioned them, otherwise, such an inference was totally out of place and was beyond mere persuasion.

He should recall his father's mistake in fighting against Merikay Silver on the wrong side. This should have been sufficient example to understand that the G.C. has limitations in handling such situations. Risking another union's refusal of his persuasion would not add to his presidential position.

Consequences need not be punishment. If you have not contemplated the consequences of the vote at NGU, CUC and soon at PUC session, perhaps you should. It goes beyond just the fact that - without a GC decision to halt the process - woman in those unions will now be ordained. Once the session was called, there were going to be consequences no matter which way the vote went. Some of those consequences are likely to be significant and lasting. And I doubt all will be positive, no matter which side you take.

It's like sitting and watching delegates vote for or against you. Proper decorum usually calls for the one who is being voted for or against, be out of the room while deliberations are going on. (Someone will surely correct this impression.)

Since he really has no voice in union deliberations and only his personal opinions and should not be interjected into this voting, it would be far better, and more courteous and present total neutrality if he didn't show up. It is improper to try in any way to affect the PUC vote. His wishes are very well known and since the outcome of the vote is almost certain, he would be receiving a second blow to him which would appear quite personal.
he should not attend nor speak.

Rudy Good
Reply
6 days ago

Elaine,

As I said earlier I think Ted has to follow his conscience, BUT I think if contemplates the situation with any wisdom he would probably see things the way you have just described.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

I believe the bylaws of the Constituency Meeting makes it his business, and extends the right to Division and GC reps to be present at the meeting and contribute. Whether it is moral for him to try and persuade a no vote - that is a different question.

Kevin Riley
Reply
6 days ago

Church leaders have the right to attend any meeting held by a 'lower' level of the church. The conference president can attend and speak at any church business or board meeting, but may not vote. He also has access to any minutes of any meeting. In the same way a Union president has the right to attend any conference meeting, and so on. There really is no moral, constitutional or policy reason why the GC President should not attend any union session and request the right to address the session. Ted Wilson did what he was entitled to do at the CUC session, and has the right to do the same at the PUC session. The GC President is not expected to be neutral, just to respect the right of the session delegates to vote according to their conscience. He presented the view of the GC executive as expressed in their letter to CUC. That is what he should do as GC President, whether he personally agrees with it or not. It may not be politically wise for him to attend the PUC session any more than it was for him to attend the CUC session, but I am not sure it is unwise from a pastoral view. Considering the flack he has taken from the left for being too political in the past, perhaps we should give him some credit if he does what is not in his own political interest.

laffal
Reply
4 days ago

The process being worked out for the PUC meeting is to vote on changing the bylaws to properly reflect the process of ordaining ministers without regard to gender. The only question has been, which of the two items to clear first, or to vote on them together.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

"It is improper to try in any way to affect the PUC vote."
This sounds like the ethical thing to do--make it apolitical.
One of the more dramatic anti-ordination scripts declares that "radical feminists" are agitating the ordination issue to further "their agenda." On the other side, pro-ordination voices often blame "patriarchal ultra-conservatives" of using the issue to try to transport the church back to Victorian times.

In both cases we are allowing fringe elements in these two groups to write the working script of this discussion. A more realistic position that fits observation is that on behalf of a number of women who have invested themselves at cost and time, and show evidence of a calling from God, certain areas of North America now believe it is time for the church to recognize the validity of God's spirit working through these women. Ordination is not so much a recognition of individuals, per se, but an acknowledgement of God's blessing on them, as called individuals—as Ellen White's experience well demonstrates.

On the other hand, those who may not support women's ordination seem to be largely traditionalists, who ask a not unintelligent question, "We've got along without ordained women pastors for more than a century; is this really so important, all of a sudden?" These are not inflexible Adventists, but mid-streamers in the church who want to keep the church balanced and on course, and fear that a great concentration of energy on the ordination issue will take our focus away from our primary work. The balanced, prayerful observers on both sides of the issue find tremendous wisdom in allowing each union to determine the pace of any change in ordination policy in their territories. If those unions that proceed with ordination demonstrate (and just supposing) that God refuses to bless the ministry of ordained women in these territories, others looking on can and will be guided. In this sense, then, the current approach in the North America is both rational and unifying. If ordaining women proves to be a grave mistake, the fruits will tell on a smaller scale; likewise, if God is blessing His people with the beginning of a latter rain that calls women to fully acknowledged full-time ministry, that too the fruit will tell. To frame the discussion on the basis of radical positions makes for vigorous discussion, but produces more smoke and heat than light. Let us not allow artificially inflexible positions by vocal minorities to distract us in this discussion....and I know how hard it is, sometimes, to stay on track when firebrands take to the floor!

Discussions of topics in the church often mirrors the modus operandi of politicians. Currently we are hearing a huge number of (often conflicting) claims about "radical" this and "Ultra-whatever" that. Reality rarely supports the claim being made. Such charges are typically raised by those who have no evidence with which to defend their position. The results of their claims are distraction from the search for answers to the pursuit of irrelevance and the disruption of real discussion about contesting ideas that leads to learning. Such distractions reveal the lack of spiritual relevance among those making the claims and the lack of focus on seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
Agreed, William -- how about that? :)

Therefore, the focus should be on the example Jesus set, His words, and the rest of the written Word through his all-male group of disciples... none of which put forth one iota of support for WO.

Patti Grant
Reply
6 days ago

Yes, I think he should be allowed to speak. I think the PUC meeting should be conducted exactly as was the CUC meeting, with all speakers respecting the time limits and avoiding the use of fire-and-brimstone treats and dire warnings of consequences. People are voting their individual consciences here. Ted Wilson is—at present—the titular head of the church in his position as President of the GC. The PUC has nothing to lose by allowing him participation. But his position does not give him the power to rule or override by unilateral (or group) mandate the valid votes of the actual Union Constituents. By the GC's own established church structure the Unions already hold the responsibility of approving ministerial applicants to the ordained ministry. I pray for all participants to hold kindness and Christian love in their hearts.

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
6 days ago

Elder Wilson should decline to attend the Pacific Union Session, while extending his best written wishes that God's will be done in all things—and that he trusts the wisdom of unions to determine, in their territories, how best to select, acknowledge, and celebrate those who show evidence of God's special call to ministry.

kLutz
Reply
6 days ago

Merely His presence at the CUC constituency session validated the process. His presence at the PUC vote would further that validation, even though not showing up will not affect his validation. If he intends to represent the corporate body of church members, it is best that he meets them face-to-face, no matter how off center they may be. It would be in bad taste, though, to cancel a prior engagement just to impose his presence at PUC. Believing his presence will make no difference as to the outcome of the meeting, I ... claim ... ambivalence.

Edward Reifsnyder
Reply
6 days ago

He should show up and speak...if, that is, he can bring himself to say something like the following.

"It is not much of a challenge for Christians to be in unity when they agree. The real challenge to unity arises when they don't agree. Jesus said observers would know who his disciples were because they love one another. I don't think He meant that because they love each other, they will always agree. They will confound the observers and love each other, and continue to be in unity with each other, primarily when they disagree. That is the real test of Jesus' statement. The stronger the disagreement, the greater the opportunity to show Christian love and forbearance in unity, which will truly amaze the observers. It's a piece of cake to be nice, cozy and unified when we agree. No test there. So now the challenge to our world-wide fellowship is to cling to and
grow our unity in a moment of strong, diverse opinions."

In other words, let healing begin. And let it begin with Elder Wilson.

Stephen Ferguson

Reply
6 days ago

Much agree - we can only hope.

-Shining

Reply
5 days ago

Ed I so agree. I think he should be there even tho hearing his pain when he talks makes me sad. Believe in WO but not sure what is right for our union right now. I remember reading abt when Ellen White was trying to get women to dress more healthfully. She found she had to take it by degrees. Not sure what will best move us forward to total unity in mission. Praying God's will.

Richard Harty

Reply
6 days ago

The SDA church is hemorrhaging its best and brightest because it can't get out of the middle ages. I hope Ted Wilson keeps doing what he is doing because it will continue to destroy an organization that has lost relevance. I find no place within the SDA church for honest dialog. Leadership has been reduced to the lowest common denominator. It needs to die.

I don't think that Ted Wilson and others realize that it's too late. The cat is out of the bag.

William Noel

Reply
5 days ago

Richard,

Though spoken with more force than I might have used, I am forced to agree with the heart of your observation. Unfortunately, both individuals and organizations must be reduced to the threat of extinction before they will recognize and deal with the problems that are destroying them. Whether it is an alcoholic lost in drunkenness or a church without the Holy Spirit, the condition is the same.

Jean Corbeau

Reply
4 days ago

Ted Wilson is on the right side of history. He's doing everything he can to save the church from further decline, and he's being attacked mercilessly for it. "Progressives" would lead us down a path to darkness--a new era of "Dark Ages," perhaps even worse than the Middle Ages.

Richard Harty is calling for what amounts to anarchy, and where are the protests?
Bea
Reply
4 days ago

Jean - it appears that gridlock is what will be the putty between the church's bricks. Now the "progressives are leading us down a path to darkness (Dark Ages)". The reaction to Richard's comments is Anarchy. This is all part of the indoctrination tactics. We can't even state the real issue without a morality smackdown that shuts us up good and proper. We put our tail between our legs and cower down which the conservative element flaps their righteous lips in slandering the person who called a spade a spade.

Bea
Reply
4 days ago

Jean - your comment "He (Ted Wilson" is doing everything he can to save the church from further decline". If we go all the way back in SDA church history to 1919, church leaders also were doing everything they could to save the church. Information was being held "close to the chest" from the body of the church - information that should have been divulged. Now, TW is between a rock and a hard place with differing concerns regarding WO throughout the World Church. Meanwhile, the church is hemorrhaging - people are giving up, exiting to start other church groups or joining mainstream Christianity. Ironically, the right wing is saying, "good news, that is the sign we have been waiting for - the end of time and Christ's Second Coming.

Joe Erwin
Reply
4 days ago

I know it is very difficult for many to hear this message. Yet, I am afraid it is an accurate message. For those who wish to be true to the message of Jesus, it is very hard to justify the fragmentation of Christianity into many little doctrinally distinct organizations like the SDAs. The creation of sects and cults really is not consistent with the message of Jesus. In my opinion, the truest version of Christianity is a very personal matter—not a matter of public show and political organization and structure and separation and indoctrination. I do not see any of the religions claiming to be Christian that really are consistent with the message of Jesus. This seems to me to be a powerful argument against the validity of all the Christian sects and denominations, including adventism. In a sense, it is a validation of the notion that we are all simply humans, that we have some serious limitations based on "human nature."

So back on topic. Shouldn't the GC prez attempt to actually exert some leadership? And should he not, as a leader, be responsive to his constituency, while, at the same time, remaining true to the principles he holds? If it turns out that he is too out of touch with his constituency, shouldn't they simply insist on replacing him?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

Being responsive to his constituency would mean that women's ordination is dead; to remain true3 to his principles would mean the same.

The world church, by number and majority of divisions are most likely in the nations that are not ready to see women ordained. His own conscience has already been proclaimed in his remarks and actions.
This is why the only solution is to allow the various divisions to decide whether WO would benefit or restrain membership growth in the respective divisions. Uniformity is an impossibility with the very strong sentiments on both sides. Like the apostles settled the first disagreement, it should choose not impose or force divisions to abide by one rule for the world. Just like trying to use only one language to spread the Gospel, it is totally ineffective.

Stephen Foster
Reply
4 days ago

You ended up stumbling into the truth in my opinion, relative to “human nature.”

Churches are imperfect and imperfectly (if at all) reflect the message of Jesus; because churches are comprised of imperfect human beings.

Human nature and the imperfection of human beings is the basis for Jesus’ message. The painfully evident imperfect reflection of the love of Jesus is an argument for the validity of the purpose of churches—where this imperfection is exposed and acknowledged.

billypk311
Reply
4 days ago

YES, without questions. He is the GC President. More Conferences he speaks at on this subject the better. It will help draw the line in the sand on this issue. The GC stance and the various Conference's stance. I am most anxious for this to happen.

Bea
Reply
4 days ago

Richard Harty - if you were a physician and I were hemorrhaging, I would want you to lead the team decisively, aggressively, fearlessly, bravely. The diagnosis is grave, it requires a direct approach and yet there is fear in abundance (like where is the oxygen - and we need to intubate immediately but fear of what might happen if we intubate?). Consequently - we are stuck like a deer in headlights as a church. WO seems to be the straw breaking the back.

What I find fascinating - the blog Mission Catalyst has very few comments. When we are hemorrhaging, it's important to search out where it is originating and what is causing it. We as a church have been systematically ignoring key symptoms, obsessively continuing to cover up, and now it's "we have to wait and see if the patient will survive because there are no magic potions available for a miraculous recovery”.

Stephen Foster
Reply
4 days ago

This seems funny, although I know this is something about which I shouldn’t laugh. It is, in all reality, deadly serious. But when I was growing up, I would occasionally hear that near the end there would be a shaking time,
“when all who can be shaken out [presumably of the church] will be shaken out.”

I laugh because how is what is apparently occurring, with the church "hemorrhaging," etc., any different than what was described then?

Yeah, I know, the progressives or liberals who don’t think there will be an end, or whatever, will laugh as well. I fully realize that it’s not funny, because there will be a ‘last laugh.’ But, again, the irony is somewhat amusing.

(I repeat I know it’s not funny.)

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

Of course, if we were losing only nominal Christians we would not have cause for concern. But we are not. We are losing people who by their lives demonstrate a commitment to Christ and his work. Whether this is or is not 'the end' any church losing (or unable to attract) people who are true followers of Jesus should be concerned.

Bea
Reply
4 days ago

Kevin, I couldn't agree with you more.

Stephen Foster
Reply
4 days ago

Neither of us is qualified to determine who is or is not a real Christian (as opposed to in name only).

Whether we continue to attract and maintain Christians to the denomination is not as important as the message that Christians accept.

Everyone who truly accepts Christ and will ultimately be loyal to Him if/when tested will avoid the mark of the beast; which is the bottom line for end-timers.

The advent message isn’t about a denomination.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

I think terms such as 'un-Christian', 'cultural Christian' or 'nominal Christian' are cheap shots with no real meaning. Sometimes like calling someone 'unAmerican' (or 'unAustralian' in my case).

I agree that the advent message isn't about a denomination - it isn't a Church it is a Movement. I actually like that the GC is actually called I believe 'The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' (i.e. we the people) not 'The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church'.
Neither of us is qualified to determine who is or is not a real Christian (as opposed to in name only).

Oh c'mon, Foster, that's not true.

Simple test: Does the person keep the True Sabbath™ (i.e. sundown Friday to sundown Saturday)?

Yes --> Real Christian™
No --> Not real and therefore doomed.

See, here we go agreeing again Tim.

If I’m not mistaken, you are (again) being facetious to make a valid point; that being that Jesus certainly has sheep that have not been of this fold.

The Sabbath, in my opinion, is not yet a test of loyalty to Christ; at least not on a macro basis. The vast majority of those who will be in paradise will never have heard of the Sabbath or the SDA Church.

So your 'formula' is not necessarily applicable; which I think was your intended point.

I do love the trademark though (it was kind of clever). But of course I agree with Stephen.

Too true, Stephen Foster. Saturday Night Live would have a field day with this whole WO thing. Just for clarification, was there any specific comment that was funny or the whole debate? I felt Richard was totally brave in his assessment. Brave in that we as SDA's are aware as to how to be politically correct and we can't speak too strongly about issues because it would automatically indicate apostacy. I for one appreciated his candor and sincere outcry of his assessment.

Should TW attend the PUC Mtg? The official GC response of the CUC Mtg. was not a surprise and supports what he stated at the last mtg.
I'm a little confused here.

There is no Biblical basis for WO, to which one might say, "well, there's also no commandment forbidding it." That's not precisely true, but I'll circle back to that in a moment. When no explicit instructions exist in the Bible, shouldn't you turn to the Lord's example for guidance? Jesus chose twelve very male disciples to serve as the foundation of His church and to spread the Good News. If the Lord had intended for women to spread the Word, He in His perfect wisdom would have set a precedent for such a thing. That He did not do this is telling. The rationalizer might then say, "well, times were different back then, and Jesus was just going with the flow and stuff because nobody would have taken women seriously as teachers of men." But didn't Jesus come down here specifically to buck the trend? He did nothing but turn traditions upside down -- why should this one have been any different?

There are a few passages where it seems that women were "supporting" the church in various nebulous ways, but a careful reader will see that the support was never in the form of a leadership role.

I remind you of Paul's words in 1 Cor 4:37-38 -- "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."

Therefore Paul is speaking on the Lord's behalf. Got that? Good. Now I remind you of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 -- "11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." Amen!!

Further, the Lord says in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 -- "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says."

Now, Ted Wilson did what any good leader should do and stuck his neck out to defend the basic tenets of his organization and, as it happens, His God. Yet here are many of you deriding him for doing so, advocating for lawlessness and disobedience under the guise of allowing individual conferences to choose their own way.

You're all members of the same spiritual body, and a body fractured will soon fall. Either you can side with the leader of that body, who was surely positioned there by the Lord in order to lead His flock, or you can side with those who'd defy the Lord's example through Jesus and His guidance through His written Word and thereby hobble crippled into your future. The choice is yours.

Of course, I am just a homosexual atheist, so what the heck do I know? :> Sure is entertaining to read all the rationalizing going on, though.
News. If the Lord had intended for women to spread the Word, He in His perfect wisdom would have set a precedent for such a thing."

Likewise, if He had intended non-Jews to preach the Word, arguably He would have chosen some. Perhaps then we should prohibit certain people from becoming ministers on the basis of race? Perhaps we can be like the Mormons, who stopped black people from becoming ministers until the 1970s. If you pick gender, you have to pick race also.

“That He did not do this is telling.”

The irony is Paul was not appointed through Apostolic Succession – He did not personally know Jesus, he did not make a living from his ‘charisma’ as an itinerant preacher but from working for a living, and He was not appointed in succession from the other apostles. Thus, the sort of arguments used against WO very much mirrors the challenges Paul faced in trying to say he was a true apostle.

In Gal 1:1 he addressed these challenges full on, noting his source of spiritual authority as an apostle came from God, not from men:

“Paul, an apostle —sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.”

Paul also makes clear in other passages, such as Eph 4:11 that being an apostle or prophet is a spiritual gift from God – again not chosen by men:

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.”

"If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized."

And yet prophets were women – both the OT and NT tells us so.

“Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet… For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.”

And yet those same Adventists who are against WO seem to be the most ardent supporters of Ellen White, who may have heard of is a woman! And guess what – she was not submissive, she did teach, she did have authority over men and she didn’t remain quiet.

As Kevin says numerous times, these texts are about women working as ministers – not being ordained as ministers. Adventists have already disregarded the strict and plain reading of these texts long ago in listening to Ellen White. If anything, the conservative elements of the Church have, since her death, made her more vocal and given her more authority over men.

“Yet here are many of you deriding him for doing so, advocating for lawlessness and disobedience under the guise of allowing individual conferences to choose their own way.”
We aren’t the Roman Catholic Church and Ted isn’t our Pope.

“Sure is entertaining to read all the rationalizing going on, though.”

The world is filled with rationalization, including by Christians and non-Christians alike. Of course it is possible to twist the Bible so it says whatever we want it to say.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
4 days ago

Tim said, "Now, Ted Wilson did what any good leader should do and stuck his neck out to defend the basic tenets of his organization and, as it happens, His God. Yet here are many of you deriding him for doing so, advocating for lawlessness and disobedience under the guise of allowing individual conferences to choose their own way.

You're all members of the same spiritual body, and a body fractured will soon fall. Either you can side with the leader of that body, who was surely positioned there by the Lord in order to lead His flock, or you can side with those who'd defy the Lord's example through Jesus and His guidance through His written Word and thereby hobble crippled into your future. The choice is yours."

Wow, in a strange twist of fate, I find myself agreeing with Tim. His logic here is irrefutable. How is it that a professed atheist can see it, but so many professed Christians cannot? Very interesting.

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

Tim's time in Adventism was not wasted, as he can do a good impression of a conservative SDA. When he becomes one (mé genoito!, as Paul said), or affirms that he believes the Bible is that consistent on what women can or can't do, then we can discus this. But I suspect he is aware that Paul both tells women to be quiet and not to talk or hold authority over men, and also gives examples where women do just that.

A completely unrelated topic. It's been said that conservative Christians do not in general appreciate or enjoy satire or irony. Not even in the Bible. I wonder if that is true? I rather enjoy both.

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

But I suspect he is aware that Paul both tells women to be quiet and not to talk or hold authority over men, and also gives examples where women do just that.

I am, but can you point me to an example of a woman holding a position of spiritual authority over men or a position of leadership within the church?

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago
Phoebe was a deacon - 'diakonos' always implies authority in both secular and sacred contexts. That Paul specifically designates her a 'diakonos' of the church leaves no doubt she was not just a general 'servant' to all and sundry. She is also described, at least in the Greek, as Paul's 'patron'. In Greco-Roman society that put her in superior position to Paul.

Junia was an apostle. Despite the best efforts of conservatives to argue otherwise, we know of no non-authoritative apostles (except for the trading ships - surely a red herring). Every other 'apostle' mentioned in the NT and in Christian history is a regular, garden variety, top of the hierarchy type apostle. St Chrysostom, a paragon of feminism <sarcasm> mentions that Junia was blessed almost beyond belief by being an apostle when she was merely a woman. Unlike later commentators, he was a native Greek speaker and near enough to the C1st, that we can't assume he misread the Greek. He read Paul as saying Junia was not only an apostle, but 'great among the apostles'.

Priscilla and Aquila taught and seemed to have had a home church. There is good evidence to link having a church in one's house and being an elder. The fact that Priscilla was almost always mentioned first makes it clear who was in charge. They (including Priscilla) taught Apollos, one of the men Paul seemed to view as his equal. A later commentator states unequivocally that Junia went on to become a bishop, but to make that more palatable he makes her male. He does the same for Priscilla (Priscus), without explaining her/his relationship to Aquila. A rather serious oversight :)

Priscilla and Aquila, and others are mentioned as 'fellow workers for Christ'. No one would have any problem with identifying all as church leaders, or at least as evangelists, if it were not for the fact that some are female. The denial of church authority to any woman mentioned is based on the belief that women cannot be church leaders. That has led to all sorts of attempts by conservatives to make the Bible say anything other than it does say. So every other 'diakonos' mentioned in the context of church is a deacon, Phoebe is a 'servant'. Every other 'apostolos' is an apostle, but Junia is either deemed a man (a position now thoroughly discredited), or made a 'messenger'. Priscilla, despite being named in the position of honour, is conjectured to have sat demurely by Aquila's side as he did the manly leading and teaching.

But I suspect he is aware that Paul both tells women to be quiet and not to talk or hold authority over men, and also gives examples where women do just that.

I am, but can you point me to an example of a woman holding a position of spiritual authority over men or a position of leadership within the church?

* sigh * stupid double post...

Jean Corbeau
Preach it, Tim! In an interesting twist on something Jesus said, the "stones" have cried out in the sense that an atheist is speaking truth because so many members are like those people in that stupid movie (I hate to admit that I watched it) who had been invaded by the "body snatchers."

---

**Kevin Riley**

**Reply** 3 days ago

Tim

If you were a conservative SDA I probably wouldn't mention this, but as you are not ... From Roman records we know there were female 'ministrae' among the Christians. That implies formal cultic service, which is likely to carry authority. Also, as historians have pointed out, Roman policy in dealing with religions was to deal with the leaders. If they saw the religion as benign, the leaders could be included in the local elite, if they saw the religion as a threat, the leaders were coerced into compliance or executed. It is hard to explain the number of female martyrs unless they were leaders in the church.

If you read the NT literally, if you interpret narrative passages by those that are viewed as commands, then you can remove any reference to women in positions of authority. A simple matter of 'the Bible interprets the Bible'. If you interpret the Bible in historical context, a different picture is formed. It is possible we disagree on using outside sources to interpret the Bible, but I doubt it.

**Jean Corbeau**

**Reply** 3 days ago

The fact that Roman historians noted such things, does not mean they were the accepted norm for the church.

**Kevin Riley**

**Reply** 3 days ago

But it does suggest they may have been. And it does provide data that they did exist. The argument 'there is no evidence for women in positions of leadership' loses its force with each example that shows there is such evidence. It also increases the probability that those Bible texts that seem to name female leaders actually do so.

**All4Him**

**Reply** 4 days ago

If you pick gender, you have to pick race also....? How many female Levite Jews were asked to serve as priest?

And guess what – she was not submissive???? .... Show me where she was not submissive to her husband? Show me in her writings where she did not place the male as spiritual leader of the home and church?

It those that are pushing for women’s ordination that must twist the Holy Scriptures and put words in Sister Whites mouth....
In Gal 1:1 he addressed these challenges full on, noting his source of spiritual authority as an apostle came from God, not from men: .....Yes the same Paul referred back to Genesis 3:16 too for he took God's authority as truth.

---

Stephen Ferguson  
Reply  
4 days ago

If you pick gender, you have to pick race also....? How many female Levite Jews were asked to serve as priest?

All4Him - we aren't Levite Jews - we are protestant Christians, who believe in the priesthood of all believers. That is the point! If there was any correlation between Jewish priests (which mind you are the Kohens, not the Rabbis we have today) and Christians ministers, none of our ministers would qualify.

And guess what – she was not submissive???? .... Show me where she was not submissive to her husband? Show me in her writings where she did not place the male as spiritual leader of the home and church?

Thanks for proving my point yet again. I have no problem with the notion of male headship in the home, but in the Church, anyone can be called to spiritual leadership, regardless of gender, race or status (i.e. slaves). You are the one who tries to argue that these gender-restrictive texts should apply to spiritual leadership, not merely leadership in the home. If Ellen White can be a leader in the Church but submissive in the home, why can't other women do the same?

---

Kevin Riley  
Reply  
4 days ago

Didn't Ellen and James live apart for a while - so they could both follow God without interference from each other? I don't know that James would have labelled Ellen as 'submissive'. And he certainly saw no opposition between Ellen being a wife and mother and a very strong voice in the church. She wouldn't stay quiet even when the church leaders fervently wished her to. However we slice this, one thing remains clear: God can call a woman if he chooses, with or without the church's approval. And it isn't just apostles and prophets who are 'gifts' to the church, but also evangelists, teachers and pastors. If God's calling a woman as a prophet makes her ordination by man superfluous, doesn't the same apply if God calls a woman to be an evangelist or a pastor?

---

All4Him  
Reply  
3 days ago

Stephen so if the "sins" of headship and submission have been abrogated by Calvary, the so has the sin of homosexuality?

Kevin Riley
Headship and submission are considered by many to be part of God's curse at the fall. I have not seen anyone suggesting homosexuality was.

All4Him
Reply
3 days ago

So was male headship a punishment for Adam's sin?

Kevin Riley
Reply
3 days ago

No, it was because Eve sinned. Surely you can read the account.

All4Him
Reply
3 days ago

Why then was only the second half of Genesis 3:16 abrogated?

Kevin Riley
Reply
3 days ago

Because the first is not the result of sin - unless you are going to say Eve had no desire for Adam before she sinned.

All4Him
Reply
a day ago

Women still encounter pain in childbirth..... Is that not the result of sin?

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

Yes, but we do all we can to prevent that.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

Dear All:
I don't know if you are a pastor, but if you are how do you handle the situation where the woman, either by conversion after marriage or some other reason, is married to a nonbeliever? The man cannot be the spiritual head in these cases and the woman must take it on. Or what of an unmarried woman or widow with children? The Bible does say that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the woman--isn't that spiritual headship to a
"we are protestant Christians, who believe in the priesthood of all believers."

This a primary tenet of Protestantism, established by Martin Luther. If you are a Protestant, you have rejected priesthood which is symbolic of Roman Catholicism which has priests. Claiming to be Protestant by denying their most essential belief and difference from Catholiscism is really quite funny; demonstrating quite an ignorance of Christian history.

Adventists can be the strongest supporters of Papal Tradition when it suits them.

It's odd, that someone claiming to be Protestant, would uphold Roman Records, as a sorce of truth. The truth is, by the time Roman Records were written, the Christian Church had been going through alot of changes, caused by those who desired to assert themselves over others.

And as for women Priests, they were alredy an accepted fact by pagan groups, before Christianity was romanized. It was no big thing to christianize that, anymore than Christmas and Easter.

And this is what Martin Luther spoke out against. He was himself a Catholic Priest, by the time of his thesis. He spoke out against the corruption of the church hirearchy, but it was never his intention to do away with, or otherwise supplant the offices of the priesthood. To the contrary, he demanded that the corrupt church officials, stop living lies and begin to live up to the calling of their office.

I'm curious if the votes "for" Women's Ordination, which are the culmination of decades of frustration felt by female, disenfranchised church members, have overflowed "at this time" -- in some measure -- as a response to the church electing a leader who is so clearly blinded by the gender equalities that God has tried to teach and emulate?

Simply put: Is Ted the red rag to the raging bull of hypocrisy and inequality that our church has practiced and taught since inception? If so, I doubt that his followers could have seen this coming. If so, perhaps this is one reason that God permitted his election. A lot to swallow for those against WO, I know.
May I suggest that Mr. Wilbur has proposed a very interesting thesis that prompts the following question: Who is the individual most responsible for causing the long simmering dispute in the Adventist Church about the ordination of women to boil over in 2012? Who precipitated the crises? Mr. Wilbur's thesis suggests that the person who is most responsible for this crisis is none other than the current President of the General Conference of SDS, Dr. Ted Wilson! I, for one, see a lot of evidence that this view should be seriously considered. In addition, Mr. Wilbur posits that this is why God permitted his election so as to bring this matter to a head. What do others think about these suggestions?

Jean Corbeau

Reply
2 days ago

They blamed Jeremiah for their problems 2600 years ago. If they had listened to him they wouldn't have been overrun by the Babylonians. Maybe there are parallels today.

Rudy Good

Reply
2 days ago

Jean,
Care to share the parallels you see between Ted and Jeremiah?

Jean Corbeau

Reply
2 days ago

Actually, I was thinking the Moses might be a better example. The Israelites continually blamed him for their problems. Both he and Jeremiah were trying to point the people to their only hope: obedience to God. Instead, they preferred to conform to the culture around them. Today, instead of listening to someone who is trying to point us back to our only hope of salvation, too many among us want to be like the other churches, which have caved in to the popular heresies of the day: evolution, cheap grace, acceptance of homosexuality, abandonment of the Biblical roles for men and women, denial of the validity of the ministry of Ellen White . . . . I'm sure there are more.

Stephen Ferguson

Reply
a day ago

Actually, if I recall Jeremiah actually told them to give up and stop fighting the Babylonians, which he was considered a traitor for suggesting.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
a day ago

It is not difficult to find something in the Bible that appears to parallel a local situation. With so many hundreds of stories, there will always be one that fits--according to subjective interpretation.

No, it's not an attempt to adopt the culture but to return to an ancient culture that prevailed thousands of years.
ago. There have always been those who want to return to the "primitive godliness" of the first church but their understanding of it is created in their own minds. A careful study of the early church shows discord and disagreement from the first and fighting over who decides orthodoxy and heresy (the majority and powerful do) and heresy yesterday becomes tomorrow's orthodoxy.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
3 days ago

It should be noticed the extreme irony that when the 3ABN program was discussing WO, not a single woman was shown or spoke out! Debating women's place in the church was being decided by an all male group!

How can one not see that men from Eden have decided the place for women: kinder, kirke and kuchen.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
2 days ago

So, basically you're blaming God; because it was He who only allowed men to be priests, and who ordained 12 men to be the first leaders of the church.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
a day ago

12 Jewish men - don't forget race. And no slaves - no forget status. Are you saying then God prohibits some races of certain status from becoming ordained Ministers?

Jean Corbeau
Reply
a day ago

At that time, the Jews had not yet lost their status as God's chosen people. After they murdered Jesus, it was over for them, and the vision given to Peter (along with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his group) clearly showed that the Gentiles were to be included as part of God's family. There has been no such revelation regarding role distinctions in the church.

But, using your logic, we should mostly ordain fishermen and IRS agents, since that's what most of the disciples were.

I'm not sure why any of us continue to debate this. We are not going to convince each other.

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
2 days ago

God in Eden, after sin, predicted that death would now occur; that men would rule over women, that despite this rulership, women would still feel desire for their husbands; that men would henceforth have to work uncomfortably hard in thistle-encumbered fields; that women would suffer in childbirth.
IF this was God's will for mankind (i.e., He intends these problems to continue, through His Divine Plan) we need to close our hospitals (pain, suffering and death are Good). Let's pull the air-conditioners out of our shops, homes, and vehicles, for God wants men to sweat! Let's beat our wives with religious fervor, for God wants us to rule over them! And when Mom starts to deliver Junior, let's hold the anesthetic for God knows suffering is really good for her—better yet if she dies and gets it over with! This may sound a bit radical, but isn't this what the Bible says, by some readings? And what the Bible says, it literally means! If we want to preserve the part about male rulership, we've also got to get rid of the air-conditioners and the weed-killers, sell off the hospitals, hold the pain-suppressants, and go back to subsistence farming, and welcome death gladly when it comes and puts us out of our misery. God is a God of love, and he wants us all to suffer! That's present truth, the message that we must carry to the ends of the earth and that will bring on the Time of Trouble. (Well, the Time of Trouble part, that much would surely be true!)

Now, personally, I was taught as a young Adventist to do everything I could possibly do to erase the curse of sin on earth. I still believe that, and that's why I paid for two Caesarians for my wife (under anesthesia, I might add), provide her a car with air conditioning (and leave the A/C on while I'm riding along with her) and nurture her with the loving touch. Nor do I encourage her to worship the ground at my feet, perhaps because we both worship a man with scars in His feet. She and I were both dedicated at birth by our physician fathers and nurse-mothers to do everything we could to erase the curse of sin... But maybe we're wrong, suppose? Maybe we’re in rebellion too. We didn't think so, but are we accursed because of our errant opposition to the curse of sin?

Bea

Reply
2 days ago

Edwin A. Schwisow - you are so articulate!! You said outrageous words to make a point. I for one was ready to get into the fetal position and pray to die!! Not really (just being a little obsurd).

I worked with a physician in Boston a few years ago (before he took wings and became famous). In his book "The Path to Love" (Spiritual strategies for healing) he stated "The union of self and spirit is not only possible but inevitable. The spiritual meaning of love is best measured by what it can do...love can heal, renew, can make us safe, can inspire us with its power. Love can bring us closer to God. Everything love is meant to do is possible. Knowing this, however, has only made the gap between love and non-love more painful." Deepak Chopra, MD

I wonder what his counsel would be for us on this issue.

Kevin Riley

Reply
2 days ago

It's a pity this has become an 'us VS them' issue, rather than just 'us' trying to find a solution. That is what made the council in Acts work: they wanted to find a solution where nobody lost. It is interesting that in the record we have of it, no appeal is made to Scripture, but rather to what could be seen by all. The gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. There was no hint in Scripture that circumcision would ever cease to be the sign of belonging to God, and all the promises of the inclusion of Gentiles said they would come to Jerusalem, not that God would accept them where they were. The conservatives were right: there was no biblical basis for accepting this. But the gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. What could the church do but say 'amen' and do what they could to keep Jew and gentile together as one community. Now we have a large group within the church that sees the Holy Spirit leading women into ministry and blessing their efforts. Can the church see that and say 'amen'?
The interesting question - and I am sure more than one GC committee member is looking for an answer as we read this - is what are the conditions that give both sides what they believe is right while keeping the community together?

All4Him

Reply
2 days ago

The solution in Act is that they were one in Spirit and TRUTH. Compromising has gotten us where we are today and people in the church on both sides are waking up to that fact. You can't have one arm around the world and the other around Jesus it will tear you (or a church) in two......

Kevin Riley

Reply
2 days ago

Which is, I am sure, what many of the 'Judaisers' said as they heard the results of the council. If God is calling women to ministry - and many of us believe we have seen that in action - then there is no compromise involved in accepting that. Being in step with God is never wrong. When it comes to actual compromise, then I will agree with you, but recognising what God is doing is something different.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
a day ago

Surely, the solution with the Jerusalem controversy was compromise: They did not all reach the same conclusion; there was diversity from the beginning; unity without uniformity. The Jews could continue with circumcision and their rituals; the Gentiles did not have to submit to circumcision or the Judaic rituals.

This is exactly the solution that should be followed today: the third world nations that wish to follow tradition of a male only leadership should be allowed to continue that practice; but the first world countries (Gentiles) should not be forced to follow the traditions, which in this instance would be male leaders only.

This decision was not based on biblical truth but a bold and innovative decision that allowed the Christian church to spread very rapidly. Had the Jews won out, there would be no Christian church today; only a Jewish sect. That is a historical truth.

All4Him

Reply
2 days ago

God is calling us all to action.....the compromising happens in what roles we think are ours rather then following His commands. What caused the rebellion in heaven? "It's not fair" was the cry...though there was a design for unity in the way God planned.

I'm not saying God is not calling women to minister in for His kingdom. Lucifer was called to minister in heaven the problem is he thought he deserved a higher postion, and convinced a third of the angels in heaven to agree. Christorculture.com
Kevin Riley

Reply

2 days ago

Been there - not convinced. If God is calling women to pastoral ministry, then they are not seeking a 'higher' position than they should.

All4Him

Reply

2 days ago

God uses His Word to show His will and Prophets to point us to His Word. You would have to twist Scriptures and SOP to to show where women are called to "PASTORAL" ministry......

Stephen Ferguson

Reply

a day ago

Same argument - reverse. Could add Papal Tradition against you in mine.

Kevin Riley

Reply

a day ago

You need to find a verse that shows men called and ordained to pastoral ministry also. We use only one Bible verse to 'prove' pastors and elders are different, and nowhere is there a record of men being ordained as pastors.

All4Him

Reply

a day ago

We use only one Bible verse to 'prove' pastors and elders are different, and nowhere is there a record of men being ordained as pastors.?

So Acts 6:6 and Acts 6:8 and Acts 6:10 are not related?? Stephe was stoned for what he preached....

Elaine Nelson

Reply

a day ago

"Stoning" was equal to ordination? Why mention Stephen? How is that relevant?

All4Him

Reply

a day ago

No Elaine...why mention Stephen?

He was choosen and ordained to preach...... He preached so well that they brought him before the council. Then in Acts chapter 7 he gives his accusers a HIlstory lesson and forgives them as they stone him to death.
Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

I don't recall in the Acts story that God gave them a vision that the Gentiles should not be forced to submit to circumcision. It was a decision made by the apostles. Did they claim that God told them what to do? Could it be that God allows humans to have the sense to realize the problem and come to a solution rather than relying on the casting of lots?

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
a day ago

As long as Ellen White lived, there was no question that in the Adventist little flock, women in the end times were called to the very loftiest spiritual responsibilities. Ours was a special, exceptionalist church for a special time, commissioned to help erase the curse of sin and receive a special outpouring of Spirit to prepare the Way of the Lord. Significantly, it has only been since the Sunday churches have become agitated over women in ministry in the wake of Ellen White's death that the question of women in the highest levels of ministerial responsibility has crossed the gulf from Babylon to Adventism.

Ellen White's example of spiritual equality (even spiritual superiority) to men's (remember Foss and Foy?) is of an entirely different order, and is extremely Spirit-driven. To say that women in Adventist ministry today are career-driven disciples of radical feminists is neither factual nor fair, neither spiritual nor truthful. These are women who like Ellen White believe they are called to ministry, who in many cases have cried to God for deliverance from the Call, and whose senior pastors and mentors have seen the fruit of their work, and concur that this is of God. As long as Ellen White lived, the question of women ministering by the highest levels of Holy Spirit power and authority was of no significant import in the Remnant. I am sensitive to the concerns of individuals who come from other faiths and have problems with Adventist positions on the Sabbath, use of alcohol and tobacco, abstention from unclean foods, and the role of the Messenger, Ellen White. But we should beware lest those who enter Adventism become the driving force against our standards, among which is the unique demonstration in Ellen White that God can and does call women in the end times to the very highest pinnacles of spiritual leadership and responsibility.

If we allow a misapplied point of view to continue to hold sway in top-down fashion, ultimately it will make of none effect the ministry of Ellen White, and will unpardonably deny that the Holy Spirit can give its best gifts to women. It is altogether fitting that here, in the cradle of the birth of Adventism and in a territory where the Messenger spent her final decade, that a stand be taken once again in the matter of our Landmark position on the role of women as leaders in the commission to finish the work. What happens in America will ultimately be emulated elsewhere, and there will be a revival of this tarnished truth. There will be no split in the denomination, unless a split is artificially enabled as a self-fulfilling prophecy. As America leads, the church ultimately follows even today, and the time has come to recognize the call of women as full partners in the proclamation and discipling of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

I can remember while working at another Christian organization, one particular group of people used all the
anti-women biblical quotes to show me that SDAs could not be a real Christian church because of its woman leader--EGW. This was more important to them than the Sabbath issue.

Again I have to say it seems VERY clear to me that one should not be an SDA if they hold literally to these biblical "proofs" about women. They just go contrary to Adventism's very existence. I would like to hear "All" or Jean speak to this. And also to the fact that ordination did not exist in the Bible but came about through the Roman church. How do they defend any kind of ordination or use of the word? Many of our workers have a laying on of hands as a ceremony, even babies that are dedicated.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
a day ago

The fact that the Catholic Church believes something doesn't make it erroneous.

I'm not sure why those other Christians were hung up on the fact that we had a female prophet. There were many of them in Bible times. But there were no female priests (in spite of it being common among pagan religions) or pastors. If this major change should take place it is curious that God did not give Ellen White a special revelation on the matter. We wouldn't be having this ongoing debate if she had made a clear statement on it. But, since it's not there, we have to use our best mental gymnastics to make her promote something that she does not promote; while at the same time we twist Scripture to support it.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

There are also no Adventist priests.

All4Him
Reply
a day ago

Ella as you read EGW you see where she places great emphasis on the importance of educating women for positions in the mission fields. There is so much that they do for the Lord work and should never be looked down on. No where in here writings are they called to be shepards of the flock.

*The primary object of our college was to afford young men an opportunity to study for the ministry and to prepare young persons of both sexes to become workers in the various branches of the cause.* 5T page 60.

*Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women who walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be men of blameless reputation.* 5T page 598

These two quote are not flukes for they fit in with the rest of her writings.....

There is an urgent demand for laborers in the gospel field. Young men are needed for this work; God calls for them. Their education is of primary importance in our colleges, and in no case should it be ignored or regarded as a secondary matter. It is entirely wrong for teachers, by suggesting other occupations, to discourage young men who might be qualified to do acceptable work in the ministry. Those who present hindrances to prevent young men from fitting themselves for this work are counterworking the plans of God, and they will have to give an account of their course. There is among us more than an average of men of ability. If their capabilities were brought into use, we should have twenty ministers where we now have one.
Young men who design to enter the ministry should not spend a number of years solely in obtaining an education. Teachers should be able to comprehend the situation and to adapt their instruction to the wants of this class, and special advantages should be given them for a brief yet comprehensive study of the branches most needed to fit them for their work. But this plan has not been followed. Too little attention has been given to the education of young men for the ministry. We have not many years to work, and teachers should be imbued with the Spirit of God and work in harmony with His revealed will, instead of carrying out their own plans. We are losing much every year because we do not heed the counsel of the Lord on these points. Testimony Treasures Volume 2, Page 416

Now some will say she meant women and men and I beg to differ because she uses both sexes and then uses only "men" when it comes to pastoral positions in the ministry.

God can and does use anyone or anything He wishes for His work. Some people refuse to believe in the Bible because of "talking donkeys" (re: The quest for reason)

This in no means belittles women that they are given different roles of great importance. Together we can finish the work as a team if we submit to God's Will our service, then to argue over power and position.

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
a day ago

I learned as a child that one of the serious theological shortcomings of Catholicism was its claim that the cross of Christ alone was insufficient for salvation, and that the intercession of the Church of Rome through priestcraft was additionally required. Prompted by the ignominy of the sale of indulgences, the Protestant Reformation targeted specifically the Catholic priesthood and its sale of masses and other forms of grace as antichrist. The entire idea of Christians needing any kind of priests to gain admission to the courts of grace in heaven is still a sacrilege. To pattern the Adventist pastorate in any way after a professional, Jewish priesthood that was desolated and abolished at the cross raises serious suspicions about the theology of those who limit the pastorate to males. The priests before Christ were males because (like the male sheep, cattle, and goats) they presaged the Son of God, who like the fallen Adam would be a male (interesting that in Genesis 2, Eve did not directly disobey Adam, who had been told about the Tree of Knowledge and its problems before Eve was created; hence Paul's admonition in his day that women should listen to their husbands and not try to teach them without knowledge, as Eve in her deceived state taught Adam that the fruit was good to eat afterall).

The Adventist pastorate today in no sense figuratively represents the male Jesus, coming to offer his body and spirit again on our behalf. Today the pastorate's sole calling is to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom. To cite the Old Testament priesthood as a precedent for the Adventist pastorate is a serious detour toward the persistent pagan practices of Babylon.

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

One big advantage of a priesthood over our traditional view is that priesthood derives its power solely from God through the priestly system. Our system derives authority from God and from the community. At least in
theory, the GC president is called by God and that call is recognised by the community. That puts all presidents on the same level as all have the same authority. All are elected, and all answer to their constituency either directly at sessions or indirectly through the executive committee. They also answer to God, but in that they stand in the same place as all of us. That is what makes the 'showdown' between the GC and the unions so interesting. Both really have the same authority, and the only difference is the somewhat technical issue of whether the actions of the unions do or do not go against policy voted by the GC session, as both are subject to that authority. If you believe the GC votes in 1990 and 1995 establish a policy of no ordination of women, then they are going against policy. If not, then the union sessions have the right to take the action they have.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

I don't find this convincing since pastors in all denominations were men in those days. The church is not stagnant. I was asking about the anti-woman statements by Paul. To take the Bible literally on this you could not be an SDA. Ellen White certainly did the work of a leader/shepherd. There was no ordaining done in the bible as we understand it today. As she said, if we took the principles of the Bible seriously, we would need no "revelations" and none were given on the subject at that time. Because we ignored a basic biblical principle of equality of persons in years to come, we now have this problem. I am one who thinks the best idea is to do away with the term "ordain" and have all workers on the same spiritual level. It was this jostling for recognition and power that caused Jesus pain. But if we continue to want to use a Roman Catholic practice, at least it should be equally applied. Also we need women pastors to counsel women.

All4Him
Reply
about 18 hours ago

"Ellen White certainly did the work of a leader/shepherd"

She did not do the work of an ordained minister and never claimed to be one. She never baptized, conducted weddings ect.

"Also we need women pastors to counsel women"

The Bible commands for the older women to teach the younger does not say for them to become pastors to do so.

All4Him
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"Also we need women pastors to counsel women"

The Bible commands for the older women to teach the younger does not say for them to become pastors to do
Elaine Nelson
Reply
about 17 hours ago

Are you not aware that all the women functioning as pastors in the PUC may perform baptisms, conduct weddings, etc. This proposal in the PUC does not change that. My granddaughter was baptized in the Northern California conference by a female pastor.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 10 hours ago

Until we have clarity on what ordination is and who it is to be applied to, it is perhaps unwise to apply our current ecclesiastical understanding to the NT. It is not clear from the NT that it is the work of pastors to baptise (Phillip was only a deacon, Paul seems not to have been in the habit of baptising his converts), ordain others (Paul and Barnabbas seem to have been ordained by the church, and no one mentioned is identified as an elder or apostle), or organise churches (where is a reference to this?). Marriages were not performed by priests, apostles or elders until long after NT times. And nowhere is ordination or any of these activities connected with the term 'pastor'. It occurs only once as a 'gift' bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon the church. Not one reference in the Greek NT demands any idea of being set apart by a superior to do the work we identify with that of a 'pastor'. If we argue that the pastor's work is detailed under the description of the elder, then why are we arguing over something the GC decided decades ago? The GC gave the divisions the right to make any decision over ordaining women as elders in 1974, and that has never been challenged. If pastors are now to be identified as apostles, we have the example of Junia as an apostle. If we choose to identify pastors as deacons (perhaps with more rationale than with apostles), then the last GC voted to allow women and men to be ordained as deacons, and we have the example of Phoebe as a 'deacon of the church' in the NT.

Which kind of makes the issue of whether Ellen White as a prophet also functioned as a pastor somewhat irrelevant.

Ervin Taylor
Reply
a day ago

"AllforHim" apparently has not noticed that whether EGW would have or would have not thought that women should be ordained would be of importance only to those who believe that EGW opinions on matters of theology or polity should be regarded as somehow infallible.

Let's assume for the purpose of discussion that EGW would not have been in favor of women's ordination and let us assume that she was "inspired." Insiprited men and women make mistakes Let us assume for the purpose of discussion that EGW was a "prophet." That does not make her infallible. Prophets make mistakes.

Whether EGW would or would not have been in favor of women's ordination is an interesting historical question. I assume that some of our Lutheran friends would be interested in the views of Martin Luther on points of theology but the Lutheran Church is now living in the 21st Century and Luther's views do not dictate contemporary Lutheran theology. I do not see any fundamental difference between the role of EGW in contemporary Adventism and the role of Martin Luther in the contemporary church named after him.
May I submit that Adventists could reasonably be respectful of most of EGW's views (some may have serious questions about some of her views, so there are exceptions), but her opinions on various questions— including women's ordination— should not dictate how a 21st Century Church witnesses to the contemporary world.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

Since Luther did not claim visions, I don't see him in the same situation as EGW. He did hold some errant views. Now I don't find all of EGW's pronouncements or written letters, etc. of the same value. Can you imagine people taking seriously every word you uttered as from God? What a terrible situation to be in. Like us, she mirrored the knowledge available at the time (for example, the cause of earthquakes). We also make a lot of mistakes in interpreting the terms and language used in her era. None, I think, is more twisted than the word "insane" which could have met anything at the time from stressed out/neurotic to real mental illness. Anyway this is off the subject.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

The ultimate source of religious authority is the people of the church rather than the hierarchy. What power and privilege the hierarchy may have, it is derived solely from the people; whether the people recognize and give deference to the hierarchy or whether they ignore it, determines the future of the church. Never forget that: there is no power that the people do not endorse.

Ervin Taylor
Reply
about 22 hours ago

Elaine has gone to heart of the matter yet again. Without funds provided by church members, the hierarchy would have no full time jobs and thus no authority or power. Those who pay tithe to the church provide the church institution with its resources and the people who run the institution somehow get the idea that they are the institution and must "protect" the institution. The solution? Pay tithe to your local church only. If enough people did that, reforms would come very quickly.

Joe Erwin
Reply
about 15 hours ago

Even better, use your tithe to directly help those in need. Delete the middleman.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 10 hours ago

Spiritual and ecclesiastical authority has no direct relationship to wealth, nor should it. Although Paul did effectively limit both elders and deacons to men (and women - thinking of Priscilla?) of wealth by stating they must rule their 'oikos' well. Only men of wealth and power were thus eligible, as they were the only ones with
'oikoi' to rule. As a side benefit, they were the ones with an 'oikos' in which the church could meet.

Using tithe as a bargaining ploy seems to me to be both unnecessary and unChristian. Tithe or not as you believe is right, but don't use it to make threats.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
about 9 hours ago

Perhaps going into a tangent, but the Church (and not just the SDA one) uses the texts re 'gathering into the storehouse', meaning the Temple to justify the payment of tithe to the local conference. But i) there isn't a Temple anymore; ii) we don't generally follow the Jewish ceremonial services, including Temple taxes etc; iii) we don't have Levitical priests anymore; iv) what about the second tithe to the poor and alien; and v) to apply to the Temple analogy, shouldn't all the money go to the GC in Washington, otherwise it suggests there are multiple Temples, which would be contrary to the intent of the text?

I never understood this at all. I also love that most denominations say the Jewish ceremonial and civil laws don't apply any more - except this one of course!

Bea
Reply
about 21 hours ago

Bravo Elaine and Ervin! I have believed for some time (this discussion at AT regarding WO seals the deal for me) that the only significant way the people of the church can influence decisions at the GC is to divert or withhold tithe and offerings. It takes time but some have been doing this for years. In one church where I was treasurer for a time, two physicians supported the local combined budget literally. When one moved away and the other died shortly thereafter the church was in dire straits. The tragedy is that most members of the local church are totally oblivious of what is happening at the GC. Also, even though the members have the POWER you were speaking of, they don't recognize that. They, in their minds, believe the GC has the power - and the church historically, innocently, obediently follows directions given. Indeed, some of us have been witness to the politics and power and vicious actions at the top if an individual does not agree.

I believe there will be a continuation of people experiencing their spiritual fulfillment elsewhere. The current situation is gridlock, oil and water. How can those of us who are pro-WO go half-way? Equality is not half equality. Those who believe in submission and suppression of women will continue in their belief.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
about 20 hours ago
You and Ervin have tipped your hand when you speak of withholding tithes and offerings. Those of us who are against WO are accused of trying to hang onto power, but now we see who is really trying to manipulate the church into conforming to their wishes. It also indicates the low opinion you folks have of our church leadership, that you would imply that all they care about is the money. I have very little respect for that kind of attitude. If the money is being used improperly by the leaders, God is well able to remedy the situation without disgruntled members taking matters into their own hands. And you wonder why we call it rebellious.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
about 19 hours ago

There is nothing in the Bible about tithing as a command: it is an OT law. There is nothing identifying the "storehouse" and it can be whatever the giver wishes it to be. Nowhere in the Bible is it to be sent to the conference--there were no conferences at that time, so the offerings received were used locally.

"As long as the readiness is there, a man is acceptable with whatever he can afford; never mind what is beyond his means. That does not mean that to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves; it is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need" 2 Cor. 8:12-14. Unlike what we were taught: pay tithe regardless if you don't have enough for food or rent.

Jean Corbeau

Reply
about 14 hours ago

So you don't believe Malachi 3:10 means what it says? That applied only to the OT? God will not bless those who are faithful in their tithes and offerings? In case you had forgotten, nothing belongs to you. It all came from God. You owe Him your first and your best. Was Jesus wrong when He commended the widow who gave the last of her funds to the church? There are a lot of people out there who would beg to differ with you, Elaine. They have put God to the test and have been blessed beyond what they ever expected.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
about 13 hours ago

Read again. I said nothing about NOT tithing. Malachi was written to the Jews, and Paul was addressing the NT Christians, you recall.

That many people differ with me doesn't keep me awake at night. My aim is not merely to please or have anyone agree with me. (I believe that you also aren't hoping for 100% agreement with you.)

Nor did I suggest that anyone should not pay tithe. I suggest you should be a more careful reader and not put words in the mouths of someone who has written something. If it is not clear, question the writer, not trying to read someone's mind. Or, do you practice ESP?

Kevin Riley

Reply
about 9 hours ago

Of course it means what it says. But tithing applied specifically to Israel as a sign that they acknowledged God gave them the land. Tithe never applied outside Palestine and adjacent lands. As originally instituted, it also
went to the Levites locally, then they tithed to the priests in Jerusalem. By the time of Malachi, the Levites had been excluded because of their corruption and tithes went straight to the priests. What exactly is mean by the 'storehouse' is debatable, as is what exactly it corresponds to today. You could argue the temple in Jerusalem correspnds to the GC itself.

We also seem reluctant to apply the whole tithing law and insist on a tithe for the poor and for attending feasts in Jerusalem. Just think what would happen to camp attendance if every SDA family had to put aside a tithe that could only be spent within the camp ground. And what our community services people could do with that tithe for the poor.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
about 9 hours ago

Sorry to repeat myself, and perhaps going into a tangent, but the Church (and not just the SDA one) uses the texts re 'gathering into the storehouse', meaning the Temple to justify the payment of tithe to the local conference.

But i) there isn't a Temple anymore; ii) we don't generally follow the Jewish ceremonial services, including Temple taxes etc; iii) we don't have Levitical priests anymore; iv) what about the second tithe to the poor and alien; and v) to apply to the Temple analogy, shouldn't all the money go to the GC in Washington, otherwise it suggests there are multiple Temples, which would be contrary to the intent of the text?

I never understood this at all. I also love that most denominations say the Jewish ceremonial and civil laws don't apply any more - except this one of course!

Jean Corbeau
Reply
about 4 hours ago

What I get from this is the idea that most of the proponents of WO would prefer an congregational type church structure, rather than the one we have now. Then they could ordain their own pastors who would preach smooth things. And you could forget evangelizing the world, or getting a pastor who isn't afraid to preach the truth. Because in a congregational system, the money stays local, and they can easily become self-focused. The missionary efforts of the SDA Church over the past 150 years would have never been possible under a congregational system of church government.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 2 hours ago

I believe you are, in most cases, jumping to unwarranted conclusions. Many supporters of WO are not supporters of congregationalism.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
about 2 hours ago

Sorry I wasn't suggesting congregationalism per se - sorry if I gave that impression. The NT certainly seems to have some sort of centralised hierarchy, and Paul did submit himself to the authority of the Apostles and Elders
'in session'. But Paul showed a lot of independence and outright insubordination to leaders 'out of session'.

As to payments, I am still not convinced Apostles took payment from a 'tithe' on the Levitical model exactly. Paul's one-off offering for the poor in Jerusalem hardly seemed to be akin to OT (and modern SDA) notions of tithe-paying.

There was certainly payment of course, but the Apostolic model seemed to be similar to the Cynics school, which was to receive hospitality as an itinerant preacher. Preachers accepted hospitality, but only enough to cover them until their next location. The irony is that Paul was challenged because he did work for a living, because the implication then was that he was not successful enough a preacher to live off his charisma.

Not sure where any of that leaves the SDA Church though?

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 2 hours ago

Tithing is a good and useful system. Perhaps that should commend it without a need to dig into its past or to argue its continuing validity as a demand. Can we not do things simply because they work well?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
about 21 hours ago

This is the saddest part of the whole discussion: people are ill-informed about the church and its decisions and of course the hierarchy has no reason to educate them about what is going on. Why should they? To do so would be jeopardizing their very livelihood?

Bea
Reply
about 19 hours ago

The further this discussion goes on the more I see the hopelessness of the discussion of WO. It's like trying to mix oil and water. We found a way to homogenize milk. How do we get homogenized? How would we feel about it? Then I think of Einstein's definition of insanity - doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. That is what we are doing now. with exasperation on both sides.

In making the point by withholding tithe and offerings, we are now accused of "all they care about is money", going further to say "have very little respect for that kind of an attitude". I'm grappling with "If money is being improperly used by the leaders, God is well able to remedy the situation without disgruntled members taking matters into their own hands". That comment deserves to be analyzed by the group.

Bea
Reply
about 13 hours ago

Jean - Would you please expand on your comment "God is well able to remedy the situation without disgruntled
members taking matters into their own hands”?

Ella M

Reply
about 11 hours ago

Dear All:
I don't know if you are a pastor, but if you are how do you handle the situation where the woman, either by conversion after marriage or some other reason, is married to a nonbeliever? The man cannot be the spiritual head in these cases and the woman must take it on. Or what of an unmarried woman or widow with children? The Bible does say that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the woman— isn't that spiritual headship to a degree?

I sent the above previously, but somehow it didn't get on. Even though I don't see the WO issue as you and Jean do, I am glad you are on here and give some insight into your understanding. I am particularly interested in your reply to the above as it is a common issue, and church magazines have not addressed it. Also wondering if you would see a resolution in having all pastoral workers as commissioned only and on a servant leader level without the superiority of the word "ordained." This would also include denominational officers.

Kevin Riley

Reply
about 9 hours ago

If you believe that we are all 'priests', then the issue becomes less difficult.

Anonymous
What Did Happen in 1881?

Submitted: Aug 5, 2012

It is becoming widely known that at the 1881 General Conference Session the delegates voted a resolution that it is OK for “females possessing the necessary qualifications to ... be set aside by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.” Because this is a surprising fact and because it runs counter to those who want to believe that their opposition to women’s ordination is in line with the Adventist heritage, considerable debate has sprung up. History is often not as simple as we would like it to be, and this is a case in point.

There are two original versions of the minutes from the 1881 GC Session. One was published in *The Review & Herald* and the other in *The Signs of the Times*. To further confuse things, there is also a third version of the minutes retyped in the late 20th century, about 100 years after the fact. All of these can be seen by anyone on the GC Archives web site.

One version includes the notation that the resolution was referred to the General Conference Executive Committee. The other version does not include this note. Some who are opposed to the ordination of women pastors point to that note as if it negates the resolution all together. In fact, there is no contemporary documentation to support that view, only the fact that the practice did not actually get started.

If you look through all of the published, contemporaneous minutes of GC Sessions around the time, you will see that there are many resolutions that include referral to a committee. When it is the intention of the body to have something studied further, the notation of referral says that clearly. When it is simply referred to the executive committee without specific language calling for “study,” the usual outcome was that the committee accepted the basic principle that was voted and gave attention to how to implement it. It appears that may have been the intention of the delegates in 1881.

Over the last three decades, researchers have scoured thousands of documents from the time and no one has ever found any document indicating that anyone among the Adventist leadership was opposed to the idea of ordaining women. The delegates repeatedly, session after session, for decades, voted to give Ellen White credentials as an ordained minister. (More about that in a minute.) Researchers have gone through the annual editions of the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* listing all of the ministers and their credentials, and found that in the years after this vote in 1881, more and more of the women serving as ministers were given a Ministerial License. In the Adventist system, this has always been the first step toward ordination, followed five or more years later with ordination itself.

In fact, it is not until the second half of the 20th century that any Adventist has written anything suggesting that the ordination of women is “not biblical” or not proper. The founders simply did not believe that. If you look at the articles published in *The Review & Herald* on this topic, you will find that (1) they support women in ministry, (2) they answer most of the very same Bible texts that are brought up against the idea of women’s ordination today, and (3) these objections came largely from people outside the leadership of the Adventist movement and those who were opposed to the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

Ellen White knew about the resolution voted at the 1881 GC Session. Her son and assistant, W. C. White, was present when the delegates voted it. He always informed his mother of all the business at such meetings. She was in California at the time, located a short distance from where *The Signs of the Times* was published and saw that version of the minutes.
The question that opponents of women’s ordination must answer is this: If it is important for the Adventist denomination to refrain from ordaining women to the gospel ministry, why did not the Messenger of the Lord speak out at the time? There is zero record of her ever suggesting there was anything wrong with the resolution voted by the delegates in 1881. If it is essential for Adventists to oppose this view, why did God not send some message indicating so?

Ellen White wrote thousands of messages giving guidance on hundreds of issues. She did not hesitate to convey even the most unwelcome message from the Lord. Does anyone believe that she ditched a message on this topic?

The ordained minister credentials issued to Ellen White for decades can be seen on the Web, in photographs in her official biography and under glass at the White Estate vault. Some have pointed out that in a few years (not the vast majority) a line was run through the word “ordained” with an ink pen. No one knows who did this. Some have proposed that she did it herself, but there is no evidence that this is true.

Some have said that these were not “real” credentials for an ordained minister, despite the fact that she was paid the wages of an ordained minister, but simply a tool to get discounted railroad fares. It is evidently true that her credentials were used to get a clergy discount on railroad tickets. But, if one is to argue that Ellen White did not consider herself a “real” minister in some sense, then we are left with the prophet of our church engaged in defrauding the railroad companies for decades. Is that a moral posture that you are comfortable with?

I don’t know in precise detail what happened in 1881. I was not there. Neither were the people who are so convinced they do know precisely what happened. We are left with a document trail that can be interpreted in various ways. We all need to be honest that how we interpret it is susceptible to our opinion on the larger issue.

What is clear to me is this: Early Adventists were not opposed to women’s ordination in the strong way that many who fancy themselves “historic” Adventists are today. That is something that leaked its way into the Adventist movement after Ellen White died in 1915 and after A. G. Daniels was not re-elected GC president in 1922. Historians have documented that from that time on, the number of women employed in the ministry in our denomination declined until, by the World War II era women ministers had almost disappeared.

I am not arguing here for or against the current issue. What I am suggesting is that we must be honest with ourselves about our history. If we make a decision based on false assumptions, we cannot expect the Lord to bless it, no matter how “biblical” we think it to be.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

All4Him doesn't believe this happened?

cb25
Reply
7 days ago

I heard an interesting talk here on the radio recently. The researcher pointed out that historically the vast majority of "religions" or "religious groups" began their existence with a significant input or role played by
women. Often in the role we would describe as Ministers or Ordained etc. In other words leadership roles. She (the researcher) then pointed out that in almost every case as the movement became established men took over and the power shifted. Often to the point of the exclusion of women becoming entrenched.

I found it a fascinating perspective into history. It would appear there are notable similarities with the developement of Adventism.

Trudy Morgan-Cole
Reply
2 days ago

I found the same thing true when I was doing research on local Pentecostal churches for a writing project. The Pentecostal movement was started in the area where I live by a woman evangelist in the early 1920s, and many of the original churches had female pastors. It was easy, looking through the histories of individual churches, to see the decline of women in leadership -- lists of pastors often began with a sole female pastor in the 1920s. By the 1930s and 40s it was common to have husband-and-wife teams: "Pastor John and Pastor Mary Smith." By the 1950s practically all reference to women in sole or equal pastoral roles was gone: the common formula after that was "Pastor and Mrs. John Smith." I think it's a very common pattern in many religious movements, including our own.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

About 20 years ago I read a book covering three women in America who established a new religion (sorry, can't remember the name), but Mary Baker Eddy and Ellen White were two.

Also, Ann Judson (sp) mother of 13, preached justification by faith which angered the preachers in that area and she was expelled to another state. Women through the ages have been highly respected in religious circles as that was the one area it was considered "proper" while all other vocations were closed to them. It is incongruous that in the 21st century where women have become equal with men in work, academics, science, etc., that the last holdout is the church. It is considered by men their "sacred calling" as set forth 3,000 years ago and they are hanging on for dear life to their only "boys club."

cb25
Reply
7 days ago

It may be of interest to note that Islam was one of these!

It is a fascinating study to examine the correlationn of the "goldenn age of Islam", with the contemporaneous "dark ages" of western civilizations. Then compare this with the emergence of the West from that era and the contemporary slide of Islam into its own dark ages. How Islam is emerging from that is another interesting question. In the midst of all this the role of clergy, the absence of, or subjugation of women and its associated theological shifts etc all play significant roles.

The point? Does Adventism cling to its own "dark age" with its corresponding discriminatory practices?

Stephen Ferguson
Islam pretty much owes its existence to Mohammad's first wife Khadija: “Khadija bint Khuwaylid

At age 25, Muhammad wed his wealthy employer, the 40-year-old merchant Khadija. This marriage, his first, would be both happy and monogamous; Muhammad would rely on the wealthy Khadija in many ways, until her death 25 years later. They had two sons, Qasim and Abd-Allah (nicknamed al-Ṭāhir and al-Ṭayyib respectively), both died young, and four daughters—Zaynab, Ruqaiya, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah. Shia scholars dispute the paternity of Khadija's daughters, as they view the first three of them as the daughters from previous marriages and only Fatimah as the daughter of Muhammad and Khadija. During their marriage, Khadija purchased the slave Zayd ibn Harithah, then adopted the young man as her son at Muhammad's request.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad%27s_wives#Khadija_bint_Khuwaylid

Kevin Riley

Laura Vance published an interesting study which points out that while the wider culture condemned women in leadership, we employed women as pastors and evangelists. As the wider culture turned more towards equality, we turned away from our previous practice. There are elements of her work that perhaps could have been done better - including taking into account the impact of depressions when it was felt that employing men as 'heads of families' was important so women and single men were the first to be let go - her basic thesis that our position has consistently been counter-cultural is worth considering.

Patti Grant

Monte, thank you for this interesting and historical explication. I find the existence of multiple versions of the 1881 minutes disturbing, especially in light of subsequent diametrically opposing views on the subject. What were the reasons for the release of two different versions? In my opinion these ambiguities must preclude any autocratic, hierarchical amputations from the body of Christ. It must be accepted as a matter of conscience, to be voted on by Union constituencies, and not a matter of church loyalty. As Jim Walters said on a related thread (Jim, I hope it is OK to quote you here): "A denomination that is able to use its levers of power to accommodate certain members who are married to multiple wives is surely able to create a way to let other members treat male and female pastors equally. If a church can abide regressive moral practices, it can allow progressive ones." I do not believe that the world church will ever be of one mind on this issue, and therefore the world church must not be come a stumbling block to those of us whose consciences support WO. God only knows each heart. Peace.

Bob Pickle

Monte, with all due respect:

- Why would you claim that the minutes in ST are available on the GC archives website, without giving anyone an issue date so they can check it out for themselves?
I just searched all four Dec. 1881 issues and could find no reference at all to the GC Session. (The session was in December, and thus the issue date could not be before December.)

The GC archives site has no 1882 issues available at all, and thus the minutes in ST cannot be available on that website as you claim.

Please provide a complete copy of the minutes you claim were printed in ST, covering all the meetings of the 1881 session.

The RH minutes and the minutes available under "General Conference Session Bulletin" record about 40 resolutions presented to the session by the three-man Committee on Resolutions.

In every single case, 39 of these 40 resolutions are clearly marked "adopted," "carried," or "approved."

The only resolution not marked in any way as "adopted," "carried," or "approved" is the one on women's ordination.

Why did you say that the confusion is due to the fact that the resolution was referred to the GC Committee, when the real problem is the fact that the minutes never once say that that resolution was voted?

You have stated that "we must be honest with ourselves about our history." I agree, and I would suggest that you set us all an example by acknowledging that (a) based on the 1881 GC Session minutes, the only resolution submitted by the committee that was not voted was the one on women's ordination, and (b) Ellen White, between 1881 and her death in 1915, apparently never complained that that resolution was never voted.

-Shining

The document about the 1881 GC is there Dec 22, 1881 Volume 7 No 48 Page 572, 576 The meeting apparently happened Dec. 1 The famous resolution is not here but the paper said they could not get all the data in bef they went to press.

-Shining

In the minutes:

FIFTH MEETING, DECEMBER 5, 1881, 10 A.M


I think this must be the 3 minutes mentioned.

RESOLVED, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.


Bob Pickle

I am sorry if my post above is a bit pointed, but this is really getting ridiculous. If women's ordination is a righteous cause, it doesn't need misinformation to support it, and thus we don't need people to keep repeating
without evidence that WO was voted in 1881, when no one thus far has produced any documentation to that
effect.

Sure, many people have claimed that WO was voted in 1881, but that doesn't make it so anymore than lots of
people saying that Sunday is the Lord's day makes Sunday the Lord's day. The minutes available on the GC
archives website are as clear as can be: Like similar proposals today that might be included in minutes, each
proposed resolution says "Resolved," whether or not it was ever voted, and if it was voted, the minutes clearly
say so.

"If we make a decision based on false assumptions, we cannot expect the Lord to bless it, no matter how
"biblical" we think it to be." Monte, I agree. Therefore I would suggest that you push for a new CUC
Constituency Session to re-address the issue of WO, since the delegates eight days ago were misled by the false
assumption that the 1881 GC Session voted in favor of WO. As it is now, by your own criteria, "we cannot
expect the Lord to bless" the decision of July 29!

Kevin Riley
Reply
6 days ago

Bob,

Would you not agree that by putting up such a motion at the GC, especially in the context of the church at that
time (and afterwards) employing women in positions open to ordination, that we can consider that the question
of whether women can work as pastors was resolved long ago? In other words, suggesting that we ordain
women - then and now - pre-supposes that we see no reason why they cannot do the work?

Bob Pickle
Reply
6 days ago

No, I don't agree.

At our recent constituency session here, we had three somewhat controversial agenda items: (a) a pro-wait-
for-the-GC-before-ordaining-women item, (b) a pro-WO resolution, and (c) a pro-life resolution. I was certainly
for # c and spoke in its favor, but it was defeated. Now if I later said that the mere proposal of that pro-life
resolution by a single church resolved the issue in favor of pro-life, even though the resolution was defeated,
that would be less than honest on my part.

Monte also stated that there were no articles from back then that could be seen as opposing WO. I do not
believe that is true either. I've been posting a number of 19th century articles at AdventTalk.com, and they
certainly seem to me to be making the very same arguments I see anti-WO folks today making. See if you can
find an article that clearly doesn't, and let's discuss it.

Finally, note that Ellen White opposed the idea that tithe-paid male ministers as a general rule would be serving
as local pastors of local churches. Our early leaders agreed. Therefore, it makes no sense to use a defeated
resolution proposed by a three-man committee in 1881 to justify having female ministers fill a role that,
generally speaking, male ministers in 1881 weren't even supposed to be filling.

Kevin Riley
So you believe the GC would consider a motion to ordain women when women could not even be ministers. That our view of a pastor back then was as an itinerant evangelist and preacher is irrelevant. The point is that we employed women to do the same work as men, and the issue of ordaining them was thought to be a possibility, and Ellen White at least supported paying them from tithe. To return to your example of a pro-life proposal, I would suggest it at least shows we believe that a pro-life position is not in conflict with SDA belief and practice and at least some people support it. A proposal to declare the GC President infallible would not make it to the floor of the session for obvious reasons. If all our pioneers were against ordaining women, I doubt the proposal would have been made.

Kevin,

I think part of the confusion may be not understanding what ordination meant to our pioneers, and to Ellen White. Three times between 1878 and 1883 Ellen White wrote this about the ordination of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch recorded in Acts:

"Both Paul and Barnabas had been laboring as ministers of Christ, and God had abundantly blessed their efforts; but neither of them had previously been formally ordained to the gospel ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands. They were now authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to baptize, and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority" (LP 42; 3SP 347-348; 8Red 5).

What evidence do you have that women around the year 1881 were performing these important functions of a gospel minister within Adventism, namely, baptizing and organizing churches? If ordination was required before performing these functions, then women weren't doing these things, and thus women weren't employed to do the same ministerial work as men. Biblical ordination is a conferral of authority, not merely some form of public recognition for doing a nice job.

Is there any biblical evidence that the early church saw baptism and organizing churches as the rights conferred by ordination? And just who was baptising all those people Paul converted before he was formally ordained? And why, afterwards, did he not baptise most of his converts? Perhaps, if this is paradigmatic for ordination, it may also be good to ask who ordained Paul and Barnabas.

I think a more important question is, is there any biblical evidence that the early church saw otherwise. We do have an explicit inspired statement to that effect in LP, 3SP, and 8Red, so that is the more important question.
What we do have in that ordination service in Acts 13 is a setting apart to a special work, after which Paul did travel, establish churches, ordain elders and deacons, and baptize. We have no record of him doing those things prior to that point.

The names of those who ordained Paul and Barnabas is presumably given in Acts 13:1.

Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

So you would agree that it is the local church that confers ordination, not some hierarchy? There seems to be no mention that those who ordained were ordained themselves. They are prophets and teachers, not apostles or elders.

Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

I believe if we got our ecclesiology right, most of our questions over ordinations would resolve themselves. And while what Ellen White says is not irrelevant to me, it is if we want to argue that our theology is based solely on the Bible. Without biblical evidence, we can't claim something is biblical, or that we base our beliefs and practice solely on the Bible. I am happy to include Ellen White and SDA tradition in our decision making, but while the church claims "the Bible only" we should at least try to live up to that.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

Kevin, I don't think Acts 13 gives us enough information to determine that the early church was completely congregational. Certainly Acts 15 demonstrates that this was not the case, that there was a GC Session of sorts that authoritatively determined contentious issues in harmony with Scripture.

As far as Ellen White's authority goes, to ignore what she wrote about the ordination service of Acts 13 would in itself be failing to live up to what the Bible teaches about the authority of the prophetic ministry. Consider whether it would have been appropriate if the folks at Antioch had refused to set apart Saul and Barnabas just because there was no Scripture that corroborated the instruction through the prophets to set Saul and Barnabas apart. At some point specific prophetic instruction is not found in Scripture yet must still be followed.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

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apart. At some point specific prophetic instruction is not found in Scripture yet must still be followed.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
5 days ago

It is amazing how those who are so certain of previous positions, will spend hours pawing through archives hoping to find significant files proving a position was held 50-100 years ago as if it had sacredness simply because of age! Does age have such importance?

Many systems were practiced years ago that are no longer appropriate today, but it seems tradition has become sacred, and tradition has no meaning other than "this is what was done before" so no reason is necessary today to do anything different: tradition must always be followed.

Well, "tradition" in Christianity for 2,000 years was that Sunday was the day set aside for worship; "tradition" ordained a male priest to hear confessions, perform marriages and funerals; "tradition" called for burning heretics at the stake; "tradition" said only priests could hear confessions and offer penance and absolution; "tradition" said no divorces were to be granted, only annullments; "tradition" said that marriage was arranged by parents when a girl was as young as 13 and she had no voice in the arrangement; "tradition" said that women stayed at home and cooked, cleaned, and cared for children.

Thank God! Tradition is no longer sacred and we can use our God-given brains.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

Monte and many others have appealed to an alleged decision in 1881. In order to verify whether their claim is correct or not, research must be done. In this case what has been uncovered is either a big mistake, sloppy scholarship, or a clever hoax by someone at some point in time in the past, and that mistake, slopiness, or hoax, whatever it was originally, has been perpetuated by the failure of those who came afterward to check the original sources.

But so what. Let's learn from our mistakes and move on.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

Someone helped me find a little more info. Page 8 of the ST 12-22-1881 issue, the last issue of the year, did report on some of the resolutions presented to the 1881 GC Session. (See http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ST/ST18811222-V07-48_C/index.djvu.) Like the report in the Review, the Signs is careful to label the resolutions "adopted." Note the last paragraph:

"We regret that the report received in the Review of Dec. 13, was incomplete. We will give any items of interest in the proceedings hereafter."

That means that the Signs was merely reprinting a condensation of the Review report, and thus the Review is the official record.
Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

It states that the report in the Review was incomplete. That does not in any way establish the Review report as the 'official' report. It does indicate the Review report was not a complete account of what happened.

We can go around and around about this, but I wonder if the GC had adopted the resolution, would you change your mind on that basis and accept that women should be ordained?

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

Kevin, you must have missed my thought. The reason the Signs said that the Review report was incomplete was because the Signs was relying on the Review for its info. That makes the Review report the original and the Signs report the copy. That makes the Review report, not the Signs report, the authoritative record.

And you are mistaken as to what the Signs meant by saying that the Review report was incomplete. The Signs was but recognizing what the Review report stated at the end: "To be continued." The Signs was merely saying that they would have to wait until they got the Dec. 20 issue of the Review before they could report further.

Whether the GC adopting rather than rejecting the resolution would change my mind, that's a side issue. Monte's blog entry was about the authenticity of the claim that the resolution was voted, and all, whether pro-WO or anti-WO, should be able to agree that it was never voted, and that if WO is a righteous cause, it needs no false information to support it.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

But that isn't all. Note two of the last three resolutions referred to in the ST 12-22-1881 report, the ones on separating the children's dept. from Battle Creek College and on ministers moving from Battle Creek. Note how those two aren't marked adopted, because as of RH 12-13-1881, they had never been voted on.

These two resolutions were referred back to the Committee on Resolutions, though ST omits that fact. RH 12-20-1881 then reported that the second of these resolutions was modified, and that they were both adopted at later meetings. Therefore, even without seeing any additional ST reports of the 1881 GC Session printed in 1882, we may conclude the following:

- The ST reports are merely a condensation of the official reports in the Review, not an independent account.
- ST reported the resolutions as presented, marking them as adopted if they were adopted.
- ST didn't mark the resolutions as referred if they were referred.

There is therefore no basis at all for using the ST account to say that the 1881 GC Session voted to ordain women as gospel ministers, UNLESS the next ST report actually labels the WO resolution as "adopted." If it does label it as such, we would then have to find out why the ST condensation of the official Review record differs from that official record.
Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

What do you make of the fact that after the 1881 GC female ministers were granted the ministerial license which was recognised as putting them on the ordination track? Does that not imply that it was expected that ordination would be granted? It seems similar to the move after allowing women to be ordained as elders that there was official encouragement to prepare women for ministry and employ them as pastors in the expectation that in the near future they would be granted ordination. Conditions changed, and it didn't happen that way, but I would still argue that the actions both in 1881 and after discussion of ordaining women as elders indicate an expectation that women would be ordained as pastors. It seems both unusual and cruel to prepare women for a position they will never be granted.

I somehow suspect that no amount of argument or evidence will change your mind on this, but those who take other positions are not without reasons for doing so.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

Do you have any evidence that a ministerial license in 1881 meant someone was on the ordination track? I would be interested in seeing that. In the cases of the announcements of licenses and credentials that I have reviewed, I saw no evidence to that effect.

"I somehow suspect that no amount of argument or evidence will change your mind on this, ...."

Before arriving at that conclusion, don't you think it fair to provide at least some evidence in support of your position? Here we have a case where rewritten history has been cited over and over again, and now that that has been exposed, no amount of argument or evidence would change my mind? That doesn't even sound reasonable to me.

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
5 days ago

Ordination recognizes past attainments to ascertain an individual's likelihood of continuing to make a consistent contribution to pastoral endeavor—as a lifelong career. This is not dissimilar to granting tenure to academicians. Up to the point of tenure, the teaching researcher is more or less on probation to see if he or she possesses the rare and unique combination of attributes necessary for a career in academics.

On the face of it, it would seem cruel and unusual (to say nothing of illegal) to tell female teaching researchers at a university, "We're glad you're working here, but because you are a woman, you will never be granted tenure. You are on probation the rest of your life."

In today's world tenure on the one hand and ordination on the other do little to expand authority, overall, and by no means is that authority a difficult kind of authority, or something they are suddenly more capable of doing, by virtue of ordination. Clearly ordination in today's world is an affirmation of pastoral ministry as a life career, and within that context one can "feel the pain" of a woman who has no hope, ever, of being recognized as
possessing the gifts of a lifelong pastor. To live in limbo one's entire career is not good for the heart or soul. The affirmation of one's career, after a period of time, is very important to one's self-identity, confidence, and career satisfaction.

Jim Walters
Reply
4 days ago

You stated it well, Ed. Thanks, Priscilla

-Shining
Reply
5 days ago

Monte - Can God bless people who make decisions with inaccurate info or false assumptions? Did the disciples have false assumptions when they chose to follow Jesus? Were they blessed?

Timo Onjukka
Reply
5 days ago

Shining, those 12 inner-sanctum GC home-boys, sent at Sychar to go to Gerazim and procure a couple Wham and cheese gyros for the band of weary detouring wayfarers-were they blessed when they returned, and asked such a stupid question; "Sir, have you eaten?" (when they were really inferring surely he's not going to expect US to eat with HER?)

And when Photina (the Orthodox bible gives her name) realized her sneer at Jesus "Sir, you have NO cup, and the well is DEEP" was answered by his sweet calling whisper to her ear-"YOU are my cup-go home and tell your village of me"...she dropped her clay cup fractured in the dirt, ran back, and all the MEN (and, I'sure, given her reputation) all the women of the village came to Sychar to dip in eternal water. Fist evangelist, and phenom, called directly by Jesus; despite the multiple cultural taboos challenged, was a woman, of ill repute, and a Samarian woman, for God's sake. I wonder how those 12 MEN thought about their own prejudices...the Bible is mute on the point, but I suspect there was some inner admonishment from the true head of the church.

Whose WERE the false assumptions, cultural forces, "inaccurate info'? Sure hope it wasn't THE Jesus, or we are all doomed.

Bob Pickle
Reply
5 days ago

Timo, Monte's point about false assumptions was concerning whether or not the 1881 GC Session adopted the WO resolution. He assumed that it was adopted, and was suggesting that those who oppose WO are basing their opposition in part on the false assumption that the 1881 GC Session never voted it.

In reality, the opposite is true. Sure, bringing up other arguments may support the position youo favor, but it distracts attention from the error that was made. If we distract too much, this error which should have died long ago will probably occur again.
Bea
Reply
4 days ago

What have we women been putting up with for the last 131 years? I remember in the mid 80's it was equally outrageous the maneuvers we had to go through to be an elder at a local SDA church. I believe in 1881 women were at home cleaning, preparing meals, caring for children (no modern appliance to assist)canning, gardening. We were too tired to show up at a meeting, let alone campaign for women's rights within the church. Who dropped the ball in 1881? Finally in 2012 men and women have indicated their vote and the new blog shows us what the GC thinks of the recent vote of the church body.

Bob Pickle
Reply
4 days ago

"Over the last three decades, researchers have scoured thousands of documents from the time and no one has ever found any document indicating that anyone among the Adventist leadership was opposed to the idea of ordaining women."

The clearest RH article I have found thus far is in RH July 16, 1901 (http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/RH/RH19010716-V78-29__B/index.djvu?djvuopts&page=4). It is a reprint of a Methodist piece which a Mrs. pierce sent to the Review and said was the most convincing argument on the topic. This piece argues extensively that women can speak, pray, prophesy, and preach in church, but it also makes a distinction between these activities and rulership. It indicates that women should not be ordained as elders, and cannot serve as gospel ministers.

This is just one of many Review articles I have found that echo the arguments and position of today's anti-WO crowd. Thus I am unsure of the basis for the statement from this blog entry that I quoted above.

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

Perhaps because a piece sent in by a member, and written by a Methodist, does not qualify as a statement from SDA church leaders? I would presume you would need an article by an actual SDA leader for that. Were we not employing women as 'gospel ministers' for some time before this?

Bob Pickle
Reply
4 days ago

If our official church paper was routinely publishing articles along these lines, and there are no known complaints about it, that is significant. Plus, most of these sort of articles were written by Adventists.

We were using and credentialing (I don't know how to tell who was "employed" and who was not) women to evangelize as canvassers and preachers, but I know of no example thus far of women being used in a rulership position, which is what the article was referring to when it spoke of gospel ministers.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

A "piece" written by a "Mrs. Pierce" over 100 years ago is the decisive answer to women's ordination. Cute!

Bob Pickle
Reply
4 days ago

Elaine,

Mrs. Pierce didn't write the piece, and I did not provide the link to be a decisive answer to the question. Certainly you could tell that, couldn't you?

Monte himself said, "I am not arguing here for or against the current issue. What I am suggesting is that we must be honest with ourselves about our history." The topic in this blog posting is not arguments for or against WO. Rather, it is about what position our church took around the year 1881, and whether our church papers ever printed articles opposed to WO.

Bea
Reply
4 days ago

Very well put, Elaine - CUTE! Ridiculous with a bold heading "1,000,000 reasons why women are not eligible to be ordained" - as men have for how many years now? This is all boiled down to UNITY. How many women feel unified? Looking at the World Church as a whole, is there anyone out there that actually believes WO is "in the cards anytime soon??? I won't be holding my breath.

Maybe there is a bit of reverse psychology in the works. If TW verbally supports the World Church regarding WO, and the NAD (as a disobedient child) votes in support of WO, TW can shrug his shoulders and say to the World Church "I did my best to persuade the NAD to vote against WO".

Jim Walters
Reply
4 days ago

Never underestimate the power of God, or women in the world church. God chose Ellen White, and God has called many women around the world whose ministry testifies to their being called of God. Let us all go forward to spread God's love to all, and recognize and support women and men in ministry. Some of our great ministers are women outside North America. Priscilla Walters

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

I believe EGW was purposely chosen as our co-founder/leader because she was a woman. She was to be an example for the church that God does not practice discrimination and that this would become an issue as the church matured. We are all equal for service. It seems impossible to be an SDA and take literally (out of context) the biblical anti-woman writings by Paul. I believe God wants His church to grow in understanding and love. When we do not follow His guidance and principles, we aren't trusting the future to Him and that future seems threatening to those who don't. We don't have a pope, and the CUC leaders followed what they
believed to be right for the church they are responsible for.
I trust if we do the right thing, He will work things out.

Bob Pickle
Reply
3 days ago

Here is a new discovery: One of the three members of the committee that proposed the resolution was Uriah Smith, and in the August 28, 1875 issue of Signs he argued that women can speak in church, but cannot have authority over men.

"The leadership and authority is vested in the man. 'Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' Gen. 3:16. This order is not to be reversed, and the woman take the position which has been assigned to the man; and every action on her part which shows that she is usurping this authority, is disorderly, and not to be allowed. Hence Paul says plainly to Timothy, 1 Tim. 2:12, 'But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence'" (http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ST/ST18750826-V01-42__B/index.djvu?djvuopts&page=4).

The 1881 resolution says nothing about ordaining women to some sort of position of authority. Thus, it is possible that the 1881 resolution was solely about ordaining a woman to preach, something that isn't even at issue today. Today the ordination debate is, basically, solely about granting authority to women to do what they cannot presently do: organize churches, ordain elders and deacons, and serve as conference and mission presidents. Thus, the 1881 resolution, even if it was adopted, which it clearly wasn't, cannot be used to support the pro-WO side of today's ordination debate.

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
a day ago

Since pastors today are subject to the authority of a board, perhaps we should remove women from church boards as a way of more fully following this interpretation of Paul's statement and applying it to all time. I would tend to disagree with the Arian Uriah Smith on this issue. The Adventist Church has been very diligent in seeking to avoid an authoritarian business model with kingly power at the top of any of its local and regional institutions. Uriah’s star was already on the wane, as Ellen White emphasized Christ more and more in her writings and preaching. Smith regarded Christ as a created being who was therefore far inferior to the more authoritarian (and patriarchal) Jehovah.

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

Pastors are not subject to the church board. Pastors are subject to the conference/mission executive committee. In that, they really don't differ from any conference employee, including the president. If we follow your line of thought, we really should be insisting no woman is allowed on the GC executive committee, as that puts her in a position of authority over the GC President. The strength of our system - when it works well - is that positions and actions are taken in consultation with those above, beside, and below. That applies even to those areas where the church has delegated authority to make decisions at a certain level. WO seems to be one area where that process has either not been applied as well as it should have been, or the process does not work.
Kevin Riley

Reply
a day ago

The authority to preach came via conference credentials, not via ordination. A man who is ordained but has no conference credentials has no more authority in that conference than a lay man. That is similar to elders. I was ordained an elder in 1991, but I have only been able to do the duties of an elder when the local church has elected me. In 1881 women were already working as evangelists and pastors (as much as anyone did so then), as well as bible workers, with conference credentials. As you pointed out a few days ago, ordination added the right to baptise, ordain and organise churches. Perhaps Uriah Smith was capable of changing his mind, or perhaps even putting forward a proposal that he had 'lost' on a 2 to 1 vote. Who were the other two men, and do we know their views on the subject? I believe that perhaps all the 1881 resolution does prove conclusively is that the SDA church in 1881 was at least capable of contemplating ordaining women. So it also does not support those who argue that women cannot be ordained at all, or that women cannot do the work of a pastor.

cb25

Reply
a day ago

I am currently reading through Homer's *Iliad*. It is most fascinating. A point I note that is perhaps of passing relevance to the WO is was in describing battle events he observes that the Trojans had made a Woman Priestess. Here's the line from page 119 of the version I'm reading:

"When they reached the temple of Minerva, lovely Theano, daughter of Cisseus and wife of Antenor, opened the doors, for the Trojans had made her priestess of Minerva."

We understand this was written about 800 BC. Perhaps it suggests that women played a greater role in religious elements of life than we sometimes give credit for in BC times.

Kevin Riley

Reply
a day ago

This is acknowledged and used against WO. If the pagans were doing it, and the Jews weren't, which example should we follow? Or, more importantly, which example would the NT church have followed? Of course, there were no priests in the NT and our church has, until recently, been clear that SDA pastors were not priests. That makes the whole 'women weren't priests' argument irrelevant.

cb25

Reply
a day ago

Kevin,

mmm which example should we follow? I personally see the OT as thinly veiled paganism anyway and not much of an example. There are a good number of practices God instructed Israel to perform which if we did them today would be considered crimes against humanity. Jihadist like destruction of God's and Israel's enemies is just one example. It is arguably one of the most blood filled, horrific religious books ever written as regards Israel's respect for and treatment of fellow human beings, so to the degree this is correct one would wonder why we would or should consider the OT as an example in how to treat or give women equality.
I recall Tim made the observation the other day that Jesus chose 12 men. If the idea that Mark is "an anti-epic of sorts" set around the Jesus person, the choosing of 12 men, and pointedly no women, needs no explanation! It would illustrate a deliberate "anti" position to that of the pagan Iliad and the incorporation of the Jewish discriminatory practice of excluding women from the top ranks within religion.

I guess I am guilty of believing that the issue of WO should not be settled by seeking to understand what "The Bible" really teaches about the subject, but rather by beginning with the simple question "What is fair, right and respectful of one another as fellow human beings regardless of gender, race, or role?" If any religious writing, no matter how "sacred", leads us to conclusions that are not fair, respectful and right, and which do not produce total equality and respect regardless of gender, race or role - it is wrong!

A glaring example of the outcomes when a religious body take their sacred texts and their interpretation of it as the final answer to the question of Women's right/equality is the two Islamic girls in the Olympics. Condemned and criticised by most of their country!

Kevin Riley
Reply
a day ago

It is hard not to read the OT as 'thinly veiled paganism', especially when the prophets keep ripping the veil away. There is a great deal of wisdom in reading the OT as a step by step process of coming out of paganism. Everyone seems to agree that God dealt with Israel where they were and tried to lead them further, but, as always, we disagree on what elements were merely a concession to where Israel was and what was basic to true religion. Was the need to have a visible priesthood a concession or a necessity? I believe in the past we would have seen it as a concession, but there seems to be an increasing move to equate our pastors with the priesthood. I personally believe we need to solve this issue (one among many) by asking 'what is God doing' rather than trying to develop a watertight case for one position or another out of Bible texts most of us admit are not entirely clear and leave out much of the knowledge we need to know in order to be dogmatic on what did happen. If we did that, I suspect the outcome would not be in opposition to the clear statements on equality and fairness.

Darrel Lindensmith
Reply
about 23 hours ago

Very well put Kevin.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
about 22 hours ago

A grave mistake is also made when the Bible is read prescriptively rather than descriptively. Reading it as instructions that we must follow is far different from reading as a story about the Israelites and their trials and failures in following God's leading. Their lives were so very different and God dealt with them within their own place and time. Reading it today as an exact blueprint to be followed is scriptural abuse and ignoring the context.

Elaine Nelson
Aristophanes wrote a play where Lysistrata and her female compatriots offered a plan to stop the war. Sappho was also a great female poet and Sophia represented wisdom.

It is a pity that so many SDA students have not studied the great works of Greek literature. They come second after Shakespeare.

Elaine, 

I found the Lysistrata topic very interesting when I chased it up. Thanks for the lead. I wish I had read some of this stuff years ago. How many evangelists have I heard talk about the history of Israel and the middle east etc with what I now realize was in so many ways a warped sense of history.

Kevin Riley

A 'mis-spent' childhood reading various myths and legends does at times prove useful. Many biblical issues cannot be solved without a knowledge of the history and social customs of the times.

Elaine Nelson

It is most interesting. I was introduced to the Greek literature in a graduate course some years ago course and was intrigued. Just as much of the Bible's OT stories may have been adapted or adopted from other contemporary literature, nothing occurs in a vacuum. Many know that the Enuma Elish influenced the Creation epic, but there are many more similarities for one who is familiar with other cultures' stories. Because most of western history as we know it originated in that part of the world, it should not be surprising to realize the great similarity.

*Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories From the Ancient Near East,* by Victor H. Matthews is a good book for discovering the many comparative laws of the various tribes with the Israelites.

Darrel Lindensmith

You are right Elaine, Matthew's work is excellent. I can see, as you say, some items 'adapted from,' but more often as an improvement in ethical outlook. As you say 'nothing occurs in a vacuum;' cultural context must be understood, and often only the ethical principle can be cross culturally translated for our use. Such as women speaking in church; even Today we would not allow a woman to be a pastor in Pakistan for obvious reasons. In China and most other places in the world there is no danger, and only a benefit of a woman as an ordained pastor. In OUR context, I don't think Paul would disagree.
While in many ways it is now a global economy but culturally, changes are much more slower. Education is the great equalizer and where it is higher, equality and especially women's position changes. The Christian "Right" is largely limited to areas of the U.S. where the educational levels are lowest.
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

We Adventists love talking about the Sabbath. It is our most obviously unique feature which identifies us as Adventists. But for all our talk, we all have vastly different conceptions of what it means to keep the Sabbath and for good reason. The Bible is very clear when it says “don’t work”. It even extends this command out to anyone under your authority at the time, presumably even if they aren’t Adventist themselves (“stranger within thy gate”). But after this, things get muddy quickly. What does it really mean to keep the Sabbath? I’ve been on a mission to discover exactly that. Consider the following schedules:

Normal/Family Routine
Sunset Friday – Family worship ushering in the Sabbath.
Evening Friday – Reading a Sabbath book, or going to an AY program, or playing with the kids, or trying (successfully or unsuccessfully) to not watch the NBA playoffs, or perhaps just hanging out with friends.
Sabbath morning – Church
Sabbath afternoon – Dinner, either a large corporate affair, or perhaps a small family lunch.
Sabbath late afternoon – Sleep until Sunset
Sunset Sabbath – Family worship to close the Sabbath.

Or the busy college/work schedule.
Sunset Friday – Sleep
Evening Friday – Sleep
Sabbath Morning – Church or sleep or both
Sabbath Afternoon – Dinner
Sabbath late afternoon – Sleep until sunset
Sunset Sabbath – Quick worship

These represent how my own personal Sabbaths look in general from week to week. At a first glance, though both are “keeping the Sabbath” in the traditional sense, one is a lot more active than the other. Perhaps you may see some of your own Sabbath schedule in one of my own. The question I am considering, and what I would like you to consider is this: Do these schedules keep the Sabbath or break it? Does play keep the Sabbath or break it? How about sex? Social interaction? Eating? Personally, I think they can all do both, and I think we do a great disservice to tell our young people that any specific activity keeps the Sabbath or breaks it.

When I was a very young, my friends and I would sometimes play “Bible Basketball”, a game where the only time my basket would count is if I accurately said a Bible verse just after scoring. This was, in my excited mind, an absolutely ingenious method to combine basketball with the Sabbath. But was that keeping the Sabbath holy? Was I “resting”? I thought so. My dad didn’t, and I couldn’t see why. In my mind, the only conceivable way to rectify the situation was to add more stipulations to scoring, perhaps reciting two verses instead of one, or a verse and a disciple etc. None satisfied my dad, and the game was eventually banned. Needless to say, I was crushed.
When I was a little older sometimes I would go to the beach on Sabbath with my family. While there I had to always appear like I wasn’t having too much fun, because then I wouldn’t be “resting” anymore, but would have instead crossed into the dangerous enemy territory called Play. I can’t even count how many times I heard some such line from an aunt or uncle: “You can put your feet in the water but you can’t go all the way in.” “Why?” I would ask. “Because” they would answer, “You would be breaking the Sabbath.” “How? Why are feet ok but not my head? Who made that rule?” No answer.

Even lately, when the school year gets very difficult, I am almost as likely to simply sleep the entire Sabbath away as I am to adhere to my normal routine. A good sermon from Pastor Pillow and an inspiring communal prayer by Deacon Sheets was always enough to get me through whatever job stress and fatigue my week had put me through. And I was perfectly justified in doing so because, after all, God said to rest, right?

All my life I thought I was keeping the Sabbath. Maybe I was, maybe I wasn’t. Or maybe my honest and sincere intention to keep the Sabbath through my activities meant I was even if I wasn’t. But I think that we have made the subject of Sabbath activity much too complicated than it needs to be.

Here is how I see it now (and if I am wrong than I defer to the judgment of more learned believers than I): God set the Sabbath up to be a weekly date, in the literal, relationship sense of the word, with man. Sunset Friday to Sunset Saturday was, from Eden, a specific time when God would want to come and hang out with His creation in much the same way as I might set a time every week to hang out with my girlfriend.

I am going to take this analogy a bit further. Very quickly in my dating experience I discovered the key to a successful date. No matter what activity she and I participated in, but especially if it was something that I already enjoyed doing, I had to pay specific attention to ensure focus was to be on her and on growing our relationship and not on the activity. It really didn’t matter what we did together, as long as we were closer when the day ended than when the day began. The activity we were involved in was simply a medium to get to know her better. Once, though, I wanted to play Halo with the girl I was dating. It was a game I was good at, and I soon killed her character. Many times. Easily. Quickly. After the game she was upset, and it took me a second to figure out why. I had forgotten my purpose. Playing and winning Halo became, for an instant, more important than growing our relationship.

This is why it is absolutely imperative that we don’t judge people, because only God knows their heart. But I understand now that this is what my dad and family were trying to teach me when I was younger. They were concerned that in the midst of my enjoyment of basketball and of the beach, that I would confuse the medium for the purpose.

I’m not going to tell you what is good to do on the Sabbath or not. Because, ultimately, whatever you and I do on the Sabbath should be done to increase our relationship with God, and only you and God know if your medium accomplished your purpose. However, for me, and to my inconvenience, I’ve discovered I get no closer to God if I simply sleep the Sabbath away as in the second schedule. Further, and even more surprising, I discovered that I can get so caught up in the social interaction in the first schedule, that that may not be keeping the Sabbath for me either.
Sabbath, as a celebration of relationship.
With family, self, God. faith community, and broader.
Sabbath as a honeymoon....It was given immediately upon the wedding nightfall...

Perhaps since the first model of Divine/human relationship was marriage, we ought to consider this aspect of a wholistic honeymoon. And not trounce someone at Halo, be too busy working to walk hand in hand with your child, or commune with your neighbors in a real and meaningful way.

And perhaps it has less to do with measuring how deep you go in the water. (Though I had to smile at your story; I had the temerity of a 6 yr old to observe that fish swam, on the sabbath! I did not sit quite as comfortably for the rest of that afternoon, while dad snored his sermon and finished his lay activites)

Jack Hoehn
Reply
9 days ago

Well placed questions and good suggested answers.

Sabbath is different for each individual because our work is different, so Sabbath Rest will be different. You work with computers all week? For you Sabbath is the day you avoid the machines and interact with people, socializing is your Sabbath. You will go visit the lonely and have over company on Sabbath, and be refreshed.

You work with people all week? Sabbath is the day you avoid people and get on the computer to read this blog! You want to sit quietly and thoughtfully in a solemn cathedral and not greet the person to your right and left in a church happy hour! Sabbath will be for the books you haven't read, and the thoughts you haven't explored.

The answer should meet the Biblical criteria of Exodus 31:17 "the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

Sabbath, the original "Pause that Refreshes."

Elaine Nelson
Reply
9 days ago

"Keeping the Sabath holy" is difficult because it is not a Christian's duty. No where in the NT is any day given to Christian converts to be observed as a special or holy day. It was given to the Israelites and them alone. The observant and orthodox Jews are the only ones who observe it properly, because it is their gift and theirs alone as God's "chosen people."

There cannot be any day in which we do not recognize God as Creator and there is no day that we cannot be doing "good." If any activity in which we are engaged is legal, helps others on any day, it cannot be wrong because of the calendar (or moon, as the New Moon was the "calendar" which Jews calculated the Sabbath). Trying to keep a day holy in just the way that God instructed the Jews is not, nor cannot be followed in today's world. If everyone observed the seventh day as the commandment dictated, there would be no firemen, no police force, no hospital workers (there were no such exemptions for Israelites), no preparation of food, no
driving cars, no paying for meals other than home, and on and on. This is why the attempt to adapt an ancient Jewish practice, one that was never given Christians, cannot be followed. Why shouldn't we do good and worship God on any day without checking the calendar or sun (instead of the moon as the Israelites did)?

Timo Onjukka
Reply
9 days ago

Elaine, your anti-sabbatarian stance is far too well and widely broadcast. You need not hog each post, on this a Seventh Day Adventist today venue. Please get some (much needed) rest and give the 99% of readers here who clearly disagree with your heterodox ideologies some rest, too! Shabbat Shalom!

Tim
Reply
9 days ago

I'm sorry, her post actually struck me as very reasonable. What about it was anti-sabbatarian exactly? I re-read the post just to make sure I hadn't skimmed over it on accident, but I'm still not seeing it. Is she mistaken about something?

To share the 30-second version of my Sabbath experience growing up:

We were a pretty typical, Adventist nuclear family, but my parents were always very lenient as far as the Sabbath went. I played video games on Friday nights, and many weekends, right on through Saturday (at least, whenever I successfully fended off my mother's efforts to get me to play outside). We went to church here and there, but it wasn't a regular thing.

Fast forward to my adult life, and as I look back on my childhood, I'm *incredibly* thankful that my parents weren't draconian with their Adventism. I look back at my rich, wonderful childhood and recall friends who couldn't play games, couldn't go see a movie, couldn't go down to the 7-11 to play the arcades or buy some candy, et al. And now that I look at some of those people as adults, many of those same people are very sadly stunted. They live weirdly pious, quiet, altogether boring black and white little lives. It's as though their authoritarian religiosity sapped them of life -- ironic, considering that its function is ostensibly to do precisely the opposite. Although I've since left the church and, having opened my eyes to reality, no longer believe in Santa Clause or the Tooth Fairy or the Lord Jesus, at the time, I felt very close to what I perceived as God. My relationship wasn't lacking in the least, even though mine was a much more "liberal" faith.

If I'm wrong and there is a God -- and rest assured, I'm not, but for the sake of argument -- I truly doubt that the Creator and Master of the Universe, of space and time themselves, will give a damn about one of his itty bitty little human believers, over the course of their almost laughably short, tiny little lives, wiped down kitchen counters or vacuumed the livingroom or drove a car or went to see a movie with the family or picked up some milk at the store or played a video game on the wrong day of the week. And if those sorts of things *do* put a bee in God's bonnet, then you can probably also find some passages about God in the DSM-IV.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
9 days ago
"I truly doubt that the Creator and Master of the Universe, of space and time themselves, will give a damn about one of his itty bitty little human believers"

Tim, that where you and I differ. There are more stars in all the universe than all the grains of sand in all the beaches of all the world. On one grain of sand, each person is like a flick of dust in all the piles of dirt over the whole earth. In the space of time that has ever existed, your life has been a fraction of a fraction of a fraction. And yet in all that, God does really give a damn about you as one of his itty bitty little humans.

You matter so much that even if it was just for you, God would have come down and died so you could be saved. I do agree largely about Sabbath keeping, but again, I believe God made the Sabbath for you - he didn't make you so you could keep the Sabbath. But the Sabbath is important, because that is why He placed it in the Ten Commandments.

I know you don't believe in any of this, but given your an athiest who like to visits an Adventist website, I can only hope that you must still have a spark of spiritual interest left in you - and I can always hope.

P.S. Those people you grew up with and no mock in a tone of superiority - who says they don't have much better lives than yours?

Tim

Reply

8 days ago

You matter so much that even if it was just for you, God would have come down and died so you could be saved.

I just find that idea absurd considering all the twisted horror, suffering and death that he allows down here, from beginning to end, untouched and uninterrupted. It seems bizarre and narcissistic, but... whatever, keep on keepin' on there, Stephen.

I can only hope that you must still have a spark of spiritual interest left in you - and I can always hope.

Heh... and I'm the one with the tone of superiority? :) For all you know, I'm correct. For all you know, I'm the one who -did- manage to open his eyes and see the cult of indoctrination that has so thoroughly deluded you. Neither of us has crossed over to death, and despite all the Christian assurances that God is real ("ohhhh heh, trust me, I know man, I know... you don't even know dude, trust me."), there's not a shred of evidence for any sort of afterlife. So... in the superiority department, I at least have that latter bit on my side. You'll have to excuse me if I point it out now and then.

P.S. Those people you grew up with and no mock in a tone of superiority - who says they don't have much better lives than yours?

I do, and it's true. If you see a kid in a wheelchair with cerebral palsy next to a playground of normal children, you could entertain the idea that the crippled kid has a better life in some way than the others, maybe in some sort of really deep zen sense, but you'd be a moron. Many of the people I'm lumping together here have never traveled more than a hundred or so miles from home, aside from a mission trip or two in high school. I've experienced more, lived more than they have along just about any dimension you can name, and to be perfectly frank, in their shoes, I'd have blown my head off a long time ago out of sheer boredom.
Tim, consider, as I know you can, that perhaps the belief it is somehow incumbent on this supernatural being to save each of us in the temporal present that is the one thing he cannot do. If one accepts-hypothetically, of course-that this planet and its billions and billions of inhabitants are somehow the petri dish of an experiment to rule on this invisible beings character. One of the frauds, perhaps, cast by many of his proponents, is that he is Santa Claus; ASK, and it is YOURS! Another, is he demands payment, so you can have your immortal chocolate-chip cookie. Or, perhaps, that he is forceful, and requires, makes you love him; and if you don't he'll drop you in the bacon rasher of hell. No, a promiscuous God-who gives you what you want no matter how many other gods you lie with, does not seem appropriate. Seems "jealous" is characteristic he used. Or, demanding payment. he's a pimp-or a prostitute, then. No, something is amiss here, too. How about a forceful, raping god? No, this also takes free moral agency out of the question.

Just because God perhaps could not save you from the angst through your accepting who you are within a culture hell-bent to beat, guilt, tear, shame it or promise magic pixie dust to get it out of you, he also could not save -with force, pay, or guilt- his own disenfranchised son who went below hell on his darkest of nights certainly does not prove his inexistence. But he did say; I'll make it up to you, in unimaginable ways, forever...

Wait for the dawn, when the temporal chronos is replaced with promise of kairos covenant.
That is his question...Hamlets seventh soliloquy asks it; every dying person grapples desperately, somehow knowing our lives are not just the clanging of these mortal coils.

The premise, then, is what sort of character does he have? If he is love-and love is the liberty of free moral agency (you MUST be able to say no to your lover, love without expecting payment, and no you too are exclusive and faithful lover), will there be a testament to his character, born out in human lives? I believe, (perhaps to err on side of caution?) there will be.

I realize this is constrained venue to try delineate some of these seemingly radical concepts, but i suspect you might understand the gist of it more than the many who only see in concrete, black-white and entirely miss the metanarrative. As you were; back to reality.

Tim

I get that. I really do -- it's an argument I hear nearly constantly as a solution to the Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People problem set, which is itself a subset of the Free Will argument. I've heard it all. At the end of the day, I can't buy into a God either unable or unwilling to save people here and now but yet somehow guaranteed to save those same people after they're dead. It's just weird to me. I mean, if my mother or father, or sister or brother or even a close friend called up and said, "hey, I'm in the hospital. I'm alone and I'm scared and I might not make it. I need you," I'd be on the very next flight out, my own obligations be damned. And I'm not even bloody omnipotent. The God you describe would be akin to me replying, "look, I can't be there now, but I promise to carry on your memory after you punch out."
Actually, scratch that. The God you describe would be akin to me hearing that they're in the hospital and then refusing to pick up the phone.

*Just because God perhaps could not save you from the angst through your accepting who you are within a culture hell-bent to beat, guilt, tear, shame it or promise magic pixie dust to get it out of you, he also could not save -with force, pay, or guilt- his own disenfranchised son who went below hell on his darkest of nights certainly does not prove his inexistence. But he did say; I'll make it up to you, in unimaginable ways, forever...*

Yeah, because after I'm dead is when being there for me *really* matters, right? I didn't actually need him all those nights when I cried myself to sleep or thought about how I'd commit suicide and make it look like an accident so my parents didn't suffer unnecessarily. But so long as he'll make it up to me after I'm dead, yeah, that's perfect. I'll have to find the time to stop by Hallmark and pick up a thank you card for that one.

But that aside, I wasn't even referencing my own angst. *My* suffering pales in comparison to what I was referencing -- violent rape, people being beaten to death, burned alive, forcibly drowned, starved to death, dying of thirst, dying of exposure, inoperable tumors or other horrific fatal diseases (before the glorious invention of morphine, no less), entire families being butchered or killed in accidents, being disowned by family and friends, etc. It's easy to say, "but He promises to make it up to you..." when you're talking about teenage angst. Tell the guy screaming as he burns to death that "He promises to make it up to you" and see how much mileage that gets you.

*Hamlet's seventh soliloquy asks it; every dying person grapples desperately, somehow knowing our lives are not just the clanging of these mortal coils.*

Uh, yeah. Our survival instinct is pretty strong. My personal favorite: "do not go quietly into that good night / rage, rage against the dying of the light." Lots of poignant prose out there on the topic. Anyway, where were we?

*I realize this is constrained venue to try delineate some of these seemingly radical concepts, but I suspect you might understand the gist of it more than the many who only see in concrete, black-white and entirely miss the metanarrative.*

I like to think I do, too. It's just sounds to me like what you're saying in defense of your God is more along the lines of what one might hear from a beaten wife, not any sort of rational, realistic assessment.

Elaine Nelson  
*Reply*  
7 days ago

Tim,

You express, unabashedly, what many dare to voice: Once a particular paradigm has been chosen, all energies are needed to bolster that paradigm, as futile as it sounds to unbiased listeners. It must be exhausting to constantly need to defend, rationalize, and justify indefensible positions in the face of facts all around, but defend they do.

Once there is the belief that such defense must be continued, no matter the cost or how ludicrous it appears,
there is no turning back. As you illustrate: replace God with a loving father (the address so often used in the Bible) and it becomes patently clear that no "loving" earthly father could ever, by any remote idea, be compared to such a gross, horrible, destructive individual. Such twisted logic defies explanation other than perhaps in the DSM ;-)  

Jean Corbeau  
Reply  
9 days ago  

From Timo: "Elaine, your anti-sabbatarian stance is far too well and widely broadcast. You need not hog each post, on this a Seventh Day Adventist today venue. Please get some (much needed) rest-and give the 99% of readers here who clearly disagree with your heterodox ideasynracies some rest, too! Shabbat Shalom!"

Amen!  
Jack Hoehn  
Reply  
8 days ago  

Elaine's contention that Christians are not required to Sabbatize is solidly opposed by history. For the last 2,000 years of Christianity all Christians everywhere have accepted that there should be a weekly cycle of work and worship. They have differed on which day that worship day should be, but honestly they have never doubted that there should be a weekly day of rest and worship. The practical problems she lists are of course real, and this blog is about an appropriate Sabbath, Lord's day in the 21st century. But really it is inappropriate to claim that Christians have never accepted the obligation to Sabbatize. Elaine stands fairly alone in left field on this!

Jesus spent a large portion of his ministry on Sabbath reform. He spent no time in reform of animal sacrifice, Passover observance, or New Moon festivals. This should tell us something about the value He placed on a proper Sabbath. And this discussion needs to proceed for the benefit of all Christians both 7th and 1st dayers so we can learn how to Sabbatize in a truly refreshing way. Even our "dear departed" members, have reminded us of the nostalgic benefit of their childhood Sabbath observence. So on with the suggestions. PS, The topic is how to Sabbatize, not if.

Elaine Nelson  
Reply  
7 days ago  

Christians have always Sabbatized? "Sabbatize" is derived from the word "Sabbath" but in this context, it no longer means Sabbath but any day of worship? Even Sunday?

Early Christian history demonstrates, as have several prominent SDA theologians, that they began meeting on the first day by the end of the first century and it became, by default the common meeting day for prayer and singing; it was never a substitute for sabbath, as there is no record of Gentile Christians observing the seventh or the first day as holy. But there is also no contention that, were it not for the resurrection on the first day of the week there would be any Christians. This was a very heart felt response to meet on the first day as a celebration of the resurrection.

'This should tell us something about the value He placed on a proper Sabbath” was all in direct response to
the multitudes of rules and restrictions they had placed on sabbath. He was rebuking them for the exorbitant placement of sabbath in the center of religion; something that Adventism copied. Ask any Adventist: "what is the most distinctive message that differs from all the rest of Christianity?" and sabbath takes its place as exactly as it did with Judaism.

Since Jesus almost single-handedly overturned many of the sabbath rules (incidentally, given the Jews by God); he forever changed the concept of the seventh day from onerous to a day of both work and rest. But for many Adventists, it has been a return to the Jewish observances rather than the changes Jesus made: no cooking, no enjoyable recreational activities (except certain specified ones), no cash exchanges, eating only in homes or church potlucks, etc. All these link directly back to Judaism and not to Jesus' examples.

All the sermons and discussions have still not shown a single Bible NT text that Gentile Christians were told to observe and make sacred any day. Without that, it's all simply an interpretation of Scripture, largely OT.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
7 days ago

You're wrong, Elaine. The only Sabbath "rules" Jesus overturned were the bogus ones added by the Jewish leaders. He never eliminated any Sabbath standards given by God.

You're beating a dead horse, Elaine. We all know that you don't like the Sabbath, or any day of worship, apparently, since you contend that no day is sacred for Christians. You're up against a brick wall. You're preaching to the small choir of non-Adventists who post here, but for the rest of us if falls on deaf ears.

Joe Erwin
Reply
9 days ago

In my opinion, Elaine has earned a place here to express freely her thoughts and concerns. There is no reason she should be discouraged from participating in a discussion to which she brings much experience and wisdom. Now, if someone disagrees with her and wishes to encourage others to ignore what she says, they should be quite free to do that. Asking her essentially to "shut up" seems inappropriately intolerant.

In my own experience as an adventist, I really liked and enjoyed, maybe even "treasured," the Sabbath. We finished all our chores before sundown Friday evening, and typically shared some quiet family time, often involving various family members reading aloud to the others. Of course, on Sabbath morning we fed and cared for our animals and took them out to graze. Then we had our own Sabbath School at home with readings and singing, and sometimes a sermon of sorts, given by one of our local group or a guest. Then there was often a good family meal for the extended family and any guests. A long walk in pristine nature was more commonly the afternoon activity than was an afternoon nap. Late afternoon usually involved gathering up the animals for the night, milking the cows, etc. Nearly every afternoon when weather permitted, my brother and I went and sat on the side of the hill facing west, where we watched the sun descend and disappear over the Pacific Ocean. Our childhood was, in many ways, a blissfully peaceful existence, and the Sabbath tradition was a lovely part of that.
I also appreciate many wonderful, spiritual, family memories of Sabbath as some have already stated. I now rejoice that it is not about a day. Jesus is my Sabbath Day of Rest - 24/7/365. Colossians 2:16, 17 - "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: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ".

Can you see how inclusive this is to all of mankind?

Elaine, no one here is saying you are not entitled to your conclusions. My point was that you have made it abundantly clear-hence there is no need to reiterate. Your lively comments in areas where perhaps you are not so contrary to what the first name of our faith community represents. Forgive me. And Joe, thank you for the reminder; I surely did not intend to tell her to shut up, at all. Perhaps to refrain, or modulate her responses gently on the Sabbath threads.

Joe, the flip side exists; the cookie-cutter comments that some commenters bludgeon the blogs with, also, get tiresome. People don't always have to comment on every post! It is interesting that the more progressive thinkers almost to a person take such admonition gracefully; it is the ultra staunch "defenders of the faith" who seem to not have this gene of self-editing and gentleness.

Timo, This is where we as SDA's are in trouble with a number of issues. Our peripheral vision is Zero. We all know that in life there are more gray areas than black and white. In the creation story God created in six days - He didn't create the 7th, He rested from creating. The 10 commandments were given to the Israelites who had just been delivered from slavery and needed a direct code in which to live. The significance of Christ's death on the cross is powerful - forgiveness of sins, grace - the meaning of the New Covenant. It is the message of "love one another as I have loved you".
Honest, sincere, and loving Christians disagree on whether the seventh day is to be a holy day in perpetuity, from Judaism to Christianity. There is no command to observe any day other than what was given to the Israelites in the Torah. Christians do not use the Torah as their guide, but as Christians are living under a New Covenant which is not a duplicate of Judaism.

In Leviticus, all the special feasts are listed, Sabbath being the first. But none were abrogated until the instructions for Gentile Christians was given following the Jerusalem controversy; and repeated numerous times by Paul who was the apostle to Gentiles who had not lived under the Torah. If he told them that no longer were there annual, monthly and weekly festivals, why restore them? Why return back to a previous time under Judaism for guide for living? Had the seventh, or any day been so important to Christians, why is there a complete absence of any instruction to the Gentile Christians on a day and how to properly observe it, as was given to the Jews? Can a day be considered holy if none of the conditions of celebration are no longer relevant? Isn't this modern Sabbatarianism? If everyone should be convinced in his own mind, what does that mean if not the freedom given us under Christ to choose?

Timo Onjukka

Thank you, Elaine. Consider, if the book begins in a garden of four rivers with a wedding on the 6th day, honeymoon immediately following-
consider if the center of the book-Song of Songs is a consumation of a wedding between the King and his perfect Shulamite bride-
and consider if the end of the book is a revelation of a wedding feast that will never end....

places the meaning of the Sabbath in a completely different light.
Perhaps, as you allude to here, that our worship ought be everyday rather than just do/don'ts on just one day (and dare claim it passes for true worship in spirit and truth!)-perhaps, in heaven, as well, we will celebrate the "honeymoon", every single day. Its just that on this cursed ground, we have all these thorns and thistles to beat back, six days, just to eat.

Bea

As Elaine stated,"...the freedom given us under Christ to choose". It's not about the day - that doesn't mean we can't choose to worship with others in a church setting.

Thank you Elaine for your posts. From reading them, I can see a very deep thinker. I for one enjoy your viewpoint, although I may not always agree with it (I do sometimes). I go to church on Sabbath but do not understand completely what Sabbath means, or how to keep it and agree that Jesus is my Sabbath rest. If the
Bible is true, we are saved by Christ life and death and resurrection, not by how we keep the Sabbath.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
8 days ago

If everyone who claims to be a Seventh-day Adventist had to defend his reasoning in court, what do you think the verdict might be? Most, I'm afraid, would fall back on tradition and a few isolated OT texts.

Only current laws are adjudicated in court; so in this scenario, it would be the new law of love and New Covenant which is the standard, now the old, obsolete letters "written in stone." How would you present your case under the current administration given in Hebrews?

Jean Corbeau
Reply
8 days ago

What have you got against the Sabbath? Even Sunday keepers recognize the legitimacy of a Sabbath. They're just confused about the day. The fact remains that there is no rationale for removing one commandment from the decalogue. If it's still sinful to lie, steal, murder, etc., then it must still be sinful to break the Sabbath. Sin is transgression of the law? What law? Since sin is against God, it can only be God's law. And since the ceremonial laws pointed forward to the Messiah, and Messiah had already come, that can't be what John is talking about in his epistle.

Would you have us choose another day? There is no other day in Scripture which would qualify for a day of worship.

All4Him
Reply
8 days ago

Amen Jean, Isaiah 8:20, still stands....

Elaine Nelson
Reply
7 days ago

"Would you have us choose another day? There is no other day in Scripture which would qualify for a day of worship."

Such a question presumes that there MUST be a day of worship. Worship is appropriate for any day of the week someone chooses to worship. Disagree? God has never limited our worship to any day. What a strange concept!

Ervin Taylor
Reply
7 days ago

As usual, Elaine typically carries the day logically. I always wonder why anyone would want to go up against her on the basis of logic and reasonableness. Now if one wishes to try to go around logic and appeal to tradition
and dogma, well, that's another kind of ball game with another set of rules.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
7 days ago

And logic trumps Scripture? As usual Elaine twists what one says to fit her own perspective. She has made it clear that she doesn't like the idea of a specific day of worship, particularly if it is the seventh-day of the week. However, if "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," doesn't make it a special day of worship, I don't know what does. The fact that it is the ultimate day of worship, a day in which one is focused on the Creator and His creation, does not mean one cannot worship God on other days. Worship is a lifestyle, not an event. But it is clear from Scripture that Sabbath is a day where the worship of God is the principle thing. The idea that this concept applied only to Jews, and does not apply to Christians is completely illogical.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

Ervin are you saying you don't believe in the seventh-day Sabbath? If so, you aren't doing a great deal to calm the fears of conservatives with their 'thin edge of the wedge' arguments.

I am not judging anyone else, but if I didn't believe in the seventh-day as a Sabbath, there really wouldn't be much point in me remaining in the SDA Church. I think there are a bunch of nicer, more compassionate Churches out there - the Salvation Army for one. The reason why I am in the SDA Church and not the Salvation Army is because I believe the SDA Church has the 'most truth' (not 'the truth') as followers of the Word, being Jesus Christ.

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

"Such a question presumes that there MUST be a day of worship. Worship is appropriate for any day of the week someone chooses to worship. Disagree? God has never limited our worship to any day. What a strange concept!"

First of all Elaine I want to wish you a Happy Birthday today.....Would it mean more to you if it was your birthday today?

If the Seventh-Day is a memorial of creation as shown in the Word of God, Revelation 14:7, Psalms 146:6, Genesis 2:3. Is it a strange concept that God the Creator wants us to follow His example rest/worship a tithing of quality time for Him? Is it not logical that the devil would want to usurp it and have a counterfit day?

Both Cain and Able were worshiping God, one chose to worship the way God had asked the other did not.

Joe Erwin
Reply
7 days ago

I'm hoping it IS Elaine's birthday today, but, beyond that,
I certainly have no problem with the choice of a traditional day of worship, and it does not bother me at all to base the choice of a day of worship in remembrance of the creation story. I have some difficulty, though, with what seems to be a rigid worship OF a seventh-day sabbath, rather than what it represents. It is a nice enough tradition. Claiming that seventh-day sabbath keeping is a condition of salvation, or something, is a perspective that is difficult to justify within Christianity.

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

Happy Birthday Joe.... I wonder why God decided to add it in to the center of His law/character if He didn't mean to keep it Himself and wanted others to follow His example?

Joe Erwin
Reply
7 days ago

Happy Birthday to you too, All4Him [wish I knew your name].

What do you suppose a day looks like to God?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
7 days ago

As as the God of the limitless universe, how can it be certain that he observes earth time; and not the time of another distant planet which he also created? Does God have a watch that keeps record of 24-hour earth days? And in which time zone does he celebrate sabbath? Jerusalem, or Australian time? If we knew for sure which time zone he chooses to observe sabbath, we could be certain of the right time; absent that, which 24-hr. period is sacred time, and which secular time? Have Adventists all figure it out so they can be absolutely positive that they choose the correct time and place for proper sabbath observance? How?

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

2 peter 3:8, Psalms 39:5, and Psalms 90:4, state our time and His time are different. It makes you wonder about the "1000" year millenium is a "Sabbath Rest" in heaven. Giving the devil a "day" to admire the outcome he has created by his rebellion to the Creator God. In the same fashion giving the Saints time to reflect and rest with Christ.

Timo Onjukka
Reply
7 days ago

A4H, when was God's birthdate, and when will he celebrate one year?
Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

I think some of you are missing the point, that the Sabbath is made for us, not us for the Sabbath. God has been resting since God created manking and gave dominion to him, which is why there is no evening and morning in the seventh day in Gen 2:1. God doesn't need to rest sure.

But we keep the Sabbath in imitation of God. We work every six human days and rest the seventh human day in imitation of God. Imitating God is how we worship Him.

The fact that God's days are not the same as human days doesn't mean that humans should start keeping God-time. We can't because we are mortal. God made human-time for humans, and God wants us to keep human-time. Human time includes a weekly seventh day Sabbath.

You're mixing concepts!

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

Timo where do we get our year from? What does BC and AD stand for? It was for a memorial of His creation that the Sabbath was given Blessed and made it Holy.....

David
Reply
8 days ago

The purpose of the Sabbath is meaningful in light of what John wrote: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” In order to know somebody is necessary to spend time with that person, that means inter-actions. Have a blessed Sabbath

Bea
Reply
8 days ago

I for one embrace my Sabbath - Jesus is my Sabbath Day of Rest. Col. 2:16,17. It is not about any day. And if we believe in the New Covenant of the New Testament and the Golden Rule, we won't be lying, stealing, murdering, etc. I think of the magnitude of this, I am inspired and awe-struck.

Preston Foster
Reply
8 days ago

We have been around this block several times with Elaine. All I can say is, as we pass this way again, when you see Genisus 2 and Hebrews 4, read them slowly. Neither refers to the law, but to God Himself. Hebrews 4 speaks to what remains, with specificity regarding the 7th day. We are not to judge (per Coloassians), but there is strong biblical foundation for the 7th day Sabbath observance for the people of God.

Regarding Charles' larger point, I have always found traditional Adventist Sabbath keeping as, ironically, work
intensive. If you are "active in the church," Sabbath morning is, perhaps, the most stressful time of the week. Getting ready for church, watching the clock, performing (teaching, preaching, ministering, singing), eating the Big Meal and cleaning up, then rushing back to church makes Sunday morning the true time of rest.

There has got to be a better way.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
8 days ago

For starters maybe we could reduce that to the "Small Meal." ;)

I generally find Sabbath relaxing. If I'm preaching I've already gotten prepared ahead of time. If I'm leading the SS lesson study, I've put the finishing touches on it before breakfast Sabbath morning. Once I'm there actually participating the stress is usually gone. The real stress for me comes beforehand when I'm trying to figure out how to approach a lesson or searching for a sermon topic; and sometimes on Friday when the sun goes down so early it's not always easy to be as prepared as one would like to be.

And Sabbath afternoon we usually take a walk, go over to a nearby lake where a family member has a camp, or read, depending on the weather. And sometimes I peruse these forums and make annoying comments. :)

Elaine Nelson
Reply
8 days ago

Is it not true that the sabbath is absolutely the one doctrine that determines one's eternal life in the end time? Do all other Christian values come behind that one doctrine?

How is it possible to believe "we are not to judge" (per Colossians) while at the same time teaching that sabbath observance is THE most important of all doctrines? It is the one and most important judgment made of someone: she either observes sabbath or not, and if not, she is not correctly interpreting the NT; and the OT is where all sabbath observances and practices are taught. Nothing at all in the NT instructs Christian converts about any day's observance. One must return to the Hebrew Bible for SDA doctrines.

If the sabbath cannot be properly observed according to the laws of Torah, how can its observances be taught from the NT where it was never taught to Christians? Only the Jews were properly instructed on sabbath observance. When were they told to instruct the new Gentile Christians on its importance and rules?

Edwin A. Schwisow
Reply
8 days ago

At one time mainline Adventism held that the Sabbath was/is the one and perfect "seal" that in the final analysis will identify and differentiate sinner from saint. That emphasis has modified some in more recent times, and Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath is now seen as sealer of the saved—and the Sabbath is seen as a sign of loyalty to God, but certainly not the only evidence of sanctification. A small but significant change.
Ellen White herself toward the end of her active life began to emphasize Christ, over and against the Law (of which the Sabbath is the Adventist centerpiece, the haloed command in the heavenly sanctuary). Today I would suggest that the primary reason we keep the Sabbath is because Christ kept it—because we follow Him. Very few of us who really, really enjoy the Sabbath do it for selfish reasons or out of compulsion, as a measure to ensure end-time salvation and eternal life. Our observance of the Sabbath is much more here-and-now, a celebration of the Lord of the Sabbath, an acceptance of this gift of God.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

We have also been around this block with Elaine several times.

“How is it possible to believe "we are not to judge" (per Colossians)…”

As to those who cite proof-texts used against Sabbath-keeping (Rom 14:5-6; Col 2:9-17) these are references to Jewish feast-days, which were also designated ‘Sabbaths’ (Lev 26:32, 37-39). Christians commonly forget the existence of these Jewish ceremonial Sabbaths. For example, Leviticus 16:23-31 (see also Lev 23:32) makes it clear that Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) is considered a ‘Sabbath’, regardless of what day of the week it falls on – it will be a Wednesday in 2012. These feast-Sabbaths are distinguished from the seventh-day Sabbath, established at creation (Gen 2:2-3) and later enshrined in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:8-11).

“Nothing at all in the NT instructs Christian converts about any day's observance:

The NT also has no instructions re the commandment against blasphemy either – are you saying we can blaspheme God?

Moreover, the issue of weekly Sabbath-keeping as prescribed by the fourth commandment is notably absent from the raging debates of the New Testament for the simple reason it was not an issue at all. As noted in several places in Acts 13:42, 15:21, 17:1-4, 10-12, 16-17 and 18:4, Gentile God-fearers who believed in the Jewish God already kept the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, attending synagogues with Jews.

As these texts attest, many of the first Gentile converts to Christianity were Greeks who were already attending synagogue as uncircumsised God-fearers and just happened to hear Paul's message preached on a Sabbath. Thus, there was no need for the Early Church to focus on Sabbath-keeping, because it was already an accepted practice by Gentiles and no barrier to their full conversion in the same way circumcision had been.

Given the reaction to the abrogation of the more Pharisaic Christians to the abolishment of ceremonial requirements for Gentiles, it is frankly inconceivable that one of the commandments in the Decalogue itself, written with the very hand of God, could have been discarded or transferred without even a murmur through the texts.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
7 days ago

"it is frankly inconceivable that one of the commandments in the Decalogue itself, written with the very hand of God, could have been discarded or transferred without even a murmur through the texts."
No one has contended that it was discarded; only that it was not enforced, instructed, explained, or taught to the Gentile Christians. To "discard" means to eliminate. Sabbath has never been eliminated as the Jews are a testimony to their religion by observing their day each week.

But no one as yet has given a single text that Gentile Christians were now to begin observing sabbath as a holy day. That they went to synagogue to hear the apostles preach has no more significance than my attending mass in a Catholic church as now conforming to Catholicism. Where is the logic in claiming as "inconceivable" what has not been stated? When the Gentiles became Christians there was far from welcome extended to them by Jews who wanted them to become full-fledged Jews and obey the Jewish laws, of which circumcision was the initiation absolutely required as a first act to be admitted and allowed to observe the Jewish Law, of which sabbath was an external sign with circumcision.

Will Durant has written: "When Paul and Barnabas sailed to Antioch they found themselves faced by the most crucial problem in the history of Christianity: the leading disciples of Jerusalem, hearing that the two preachers were accepting gentile converts without requiring circumcision, had come to Antioch to 'teach the brethren that unless they were circumcized as Moses had prescribed, they could not be saved.' To the Jew circumcision was not so much a ritual of health as a holy symbol of his people's ancient covenant with God, and the Christian Jew was appalled at the thought of breaking that covenant. For their part Paul and Barnabas realized that if these emissaries had their way, Christianity would never be accepted by any significant number of gentiles; it would remain 'a Jewish heresy' and would fade out in a century."*

Had you lived then, would you have sided with the Jews or the Gentiles?

*Durant, Will, *Caesar and Christ.*

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

Acts 13:42 and Acts 12:44 were written about AD 45 now why would the Gentiles ask that "these words be preached unto them the next sabbath"? and why would "almost the whole city come together to hear the word of God the next sabbath"? If the sabbath did not mean anything to the Gentiles why didn't Paul just preach the next day? If the day didn't matter why were the Jew so envious?

All4Him
Reply
7 days ago

Acts 13:44 not 12:44

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

In a well known retort, the command in the Torah not to curse a deaf man is also not found in the NT - does that mean then that Gentiles were free to curse deaf men? There is also no command in the NT anywhere for Gentiles not to break the 3rd Commandment about taking the Lord's name in vain - does that mean that the
Gentiles were free from that requirement.

The onus is on you to say Gentiles were free from the Moral aspects of the Torah (as opposed to ceremonial and civil aspects per the orthodox creeds of Christendom), not on me to prove to you that there is a text in the NT showing Gentiles Christians began to observe the Sabbath day. That is the doctrine of precedence laid down for the test of a true vs false prophet in Deut.

I totally agree with you re the quote from Durant. One can see how the ceremonial ritual of circumcision would have been a barrier to Gentile conversion, because not many men would be willing to cut their male member would they? By contrast, Sabbath-keeping was clearly no such barrier, because as I quoted to you, Gentiles were already keeping the Sabbath as 'God-fearers'.

It was the ceremonial aspects of Judaism, not its Moral aspects, which were the barriers to Gentile converts. Sabbath-keeping was no such barrier - it was a total non-issue, with the exception of Jewish feast days such as Passover and Yom Kippur. That is why there is a total silence of the topic in the NT, like the 3rd commandment about blaspheming God.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
7 days ago

"In a well known retort, the command in the Torah not to curse a deaf man is also not found in the NT - does that mean then that Gentiles were free to curse deaf men? There is also no command in the NT anywhere for Gentiles not to break the 3rd Commandment about taking the Lord's name in vain - does that mean that the Gentiles were free from that requirement.

The onus is on you to say Gentiles were free from the Moral aspects of the Torah (as opposed to ceremonial and civil aspects per the orthodox creeds of Christendom), not on me to prove to you that there is a text in the NT showing Gentiles Christians began to observe the Sabbath day."

Very well, stated. Stephen. You and I are not always in agreement, but I really appreciate the way you articulated this principle. I'm curious to see what response will be given by those opposed to the Sabbath.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

The Colossian letter follows the OT sequence: yearly, monthly, weekly, or in the reverse order in other texts. To claim that in each time "sabbath" is used it is referring to the annual celebrations is incoherent, otherwise these verses would read: "let no one act as your judge regarding annual, monthly, or annual feasts." (See 2 Chron. 2:4; 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 8:12, 13; 2 Chron 2:13.

Almost completely overlooked are the numerous times new moons and sabbath are connected. They were both regularly celebrated by the Jews and the favorite SDA text in Is. 66 says that sabbaths and new moons will be celebrated in the new earth. Yet, where are the new moon celebrations today? The new moon was the calendrical method of calculating sabbath and it was not consistently each seventh day as the moon cycles are not based on our modern calendars, meaning that sabbaths were not always and exactly every seventh day. But then, it should make no difference except for those who want to be exactly correct and observe the proper time by the sun--which was not the method used by the Jews.
If there are "Moral aspects" of the law, or there "Immoral aspects"? The civil laws that are embodied in laws long before Moses received the Law have always been part of humanity: there was no written law yet when Cain killed Abel, he sinned. Only under a theocracy can the first four be honored, and one cannot be called "immoral" if he does not follow them. But then, the Bible never refers to "moral law."

Jean Corbeau
Reply
6 days ago

The response is even more convoluted than I expected. A careful study would show that the sabbaths connected to the new moon had no bearing on or connection to the weekly Sabbath.

Timo Onjukka
Reply
8 days ago

Preston's point is too oft true. Some indeed do work, very hard, in order to have the perfect day of rest! I'll never forget, last summer, a co-SS class facilitator/physician friend of mine had 50 of our class for Sabbath fellowship and meal. To watch him chortle, with half a mouthful of homemade blueberry cheesecake, that he had ALWAYS kept a perfect day of rest. Juxtaposed in stark counterpoint in the glass wall behind him? His wife of 50 years, two grown daughters, and at least a half dozen others scurrying to prepare his perfect restful day. Almost as if the day itself is made a god, which, i suppose, as a god I can "carry", it is better than one fashioned of sticks or stones. But then again, for some, it DOES become about the church as a place. Worship is a state of being, less than doing, or knowing...

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

Jesus had a lot to say about the Sabbath. He never ever said it was abolished but He did have a lot about true Sabbath-keeping. Sometimes true Sabbath-keeping does involve work, godly work, as the priests baked bread in the Temple on the Sabbath and Jesus' disciples picked grain. However, sometimes Adventists indeed like the Pharisees in elevating Sabbath observance to a god-like status.

There appears to be a lot of baths being thrown out with a lot of babies.

Moderator
Reply
8 days ago

JEAN CORBEAU

Removed off topic post. Please refrain from non-contributory and derisive posts.

David IJB
Reply
7 days ago

To keep the Sabbath HOLY for an ancient Hebrew would be to maintain the 613 Torah prohibitions often called
the Holiness Codes:

Physical contact when a woman has her period (Leviticus 18:19), Harvesting the corners of a field (19:9), Eating fruit from a young tree (19:23), Cross-breeding livestock (19:19), Sowing a field with mixed seed (19:19), Shaving or getting a hair cut (19:27), Tattoos (19:28), Even a mildly disabled person from becoming a priest (21:18), Charging of interest on a loan (25:37), Wearing of clothes made from a blend of textile materials Eating of non-kosher foods

Ellen White added a few of her own definitions to the Holiness code:

- Not to bake, cook or polish shoes: “It is dishonoring God to make the Sabbath a feast day, a day of baking and boiling, of blacking boots and performing work that should be done the six working days. Do not dishonor God by bringing down its sacredness to the level of the common working days.” {LUH, April 14, 1909 par. 3}
- Not to attend church in schoolroom: “When children attend day school in the same place where they assemble to worship on the Sabbath, they cannot be made to feel the sacredness of the place, and that they must enter with feelings of reverence. The sacred and common are so blended that it is difficult to distinguish them.” {CG 542.3}
- Not to let our children attend public school on Sabbath {HS 216.3}
- Not to permit children to play on the Sabbath:“Parents…Do not suffer them to violate God's holy day by playing in the house or out-of-doors. You may just as well break the Sabbath yourselves as to let your children do it, and when you suffer your children to wander about and suffer them to play upon the Sabbath, God looks upon you as Sabbathbreakers. {CG 533.2}

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
7 days ago

I think you are confusing Moral, civil and ceremonial aspects of the Torah. Moreover, you are confusing a proper application of the Torah, which Jesus expounded, and the additional oral commands of the Mitzvah that were eventually codified in the Talmud, which Jesus wholly rejected.

Also, when you say 'ancient Hebrew' what do you mean? There was no one 'ancient Hebrew' religion - there was always factions and groups. Do you mean the Habiru mixed multitude, pre-Josiah Israelite, North Israelite, Southern Judahite, exiled Judahite, Samaritan, NT Sadduces or NT Essene. What today we consider a 'Jew' is really just the Pharisee faction, which became the dominant faction with Judaism after the destruction of the Temple.

Christianity is also arguably a 'ancient Hebrew' religion, and it was certainly initially considered a Jewish sect? Moreover, there is religious and cultural differences between the Jewish Christian (which died out) and Gentile Christian factions (which ended up dominating).

The common charge against SDAs that they are 'Jewish' is really a red herring - and not true. The groups that try to be most Christian and not Jewish were the Gnostics, already condemned by Paul in his own day, and saw their greatest fulfillment in the Nazi Church of the 3rd Reich (who tried to remove all signs of Judaism from Christianity and turn Jesus into an Aryan Superman or Ubertmench).

Elaine Nelson
Reply
It is only after Christianity began that the Law was divided; prior to that the Jews never separated their Law, it was the entire Law and never divided into parts. Notice that when the Jerusalem controversy erupted the Gentiles were never accused of breaking a ceremonial or sacrificial part of the Law, but the entire Law.

Even in the NT, references are to the Law, not the "ceremonial" or "sacrificial" law. When did this begin? Jesus was an observant Jew all his life, beginning with circumcision. He did not initiate Christianity: it was his followers after his death who began preaching his resurrection and that belief in him was the major difference. The doctrines were introduced gradually, not all at once, and when the Jewish Christians tried to force the Gentile Christians to accept the Law, is when changes were made. No longer do we live under the Law that was the guide for Jews, but we are now under Christ who replaced the Law.

Yes, there were many sects in Judaism, but they all had in common: circumcision and sabbath--the constants that run through all the various sects. The Gnostics and Essenes and contemporary sects are unrelated to modern Christianity. While it is true that Christianity was once considered a heresy of Judaism, the separation began toward the end of the first century because the Romans considered Christianity to be a sect and Judaism had special privileges and recognitions not afforded Christianity. It was Christians who were persecuted, not Jews when this separation occurred, and devotion to the sabbath was THE distinguishing feature dividing them.

As to Jesus rejecting the Talmud: one cannot pick and choose which of the 600+ Jewish laws are still applicable and simply personally rejecting others. Jews considered the Law as one: it is almost always referred to as the Law.

It is true that Christianity was born out of Judaism, but like a child, it does not imitate or follow the parent in every detail: changes were made in Christianity that did not conform to Judaism and the devotion to the seventh day as holy was, along with circumcision and the dietary rules, some of the first to be changed. This was done to live the inclusion taught by Paul: no longer was religion a separating, but was drawing together of disparate groups. Circumcision, sabbath and dietary laws were given by God to separate his people from all other people: if one cannot intermarry, work together, and eat and accept and return hospitality, those three will maintain separation.

Today, Adventists are maintaining that separation through sabbath, and often through dietary rules. Sabbath separates in any unapproved activities from cradle to grave and encourages, almost demands exclusion. This was Judaism demanded; Christianity called for inclusion. How is that working? Many programs in Adventism are specifically designed to continue that exclusion.

Elaine, well said.

I doubt that very many Adventists stop to think that the major thing we have added or restored to Christianity are some of the elements of Judaism that were designed to separate the Jews from other peoples.

Joe Erwin
The SDA practices that promote and enforce cohesion and exclusion smack of "cultism."

Joe Erwin
Reply
6 days ago

"cohesion" should be "cohesion" (sorry for typo)

David IJB
Reply
6 days ago

@ I think you are confusing Moral, civil and ceremonial aspects of the Torah

The holiness codes of the Torah (Gen-Deut) consisted of laws that related to ceremonial sacrifice, worship, community, social ethics, moral conduct—every aspect of life. In the Torah, the contents are diverse, but everything is united by the theme of Holiness Unto the Lord.

For an ancient Israelite, pre-Babylonian, to keep a Sabbath holy would imply being faithful to the entire holiness creed. Our form of Sabbath keeping—an attitude of worship and church attendance—would be something foreign to an ancient Israelite, because their worship of God included adherence to these codes or it was unacceptable.

God instructed Moses that sexual emissions (Lev 15:1-12) could make a person unclean, as does menstruation (Lev 19), including childbearing (Lev 12:1-5), and marital relations (Lev 15:18). A priest with physical deformities could profane the sanctuary (Lev 21:16-24), as also mixing fabrics (Lev. 19:19) or seeds (Lev. 19:19) or livestock (Lev. 19:19) was considered unclean, rendering the participants unclean for good Sabbath keeping.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

The separation of the Law into three parts is a modern, post-Judaic introduction. It was Christians that separated the Law so they could reject those parts that were objectionable while maintaining that the Law was still in force.

But in the epistles written to the Gentiles, the place of the Law was shown to be a guide to lead us until Christ came. So why, if Christians now worship Christ, would they return to the Law as their guide? Are letters written in stone preferable to a living guide and example? Is the Law superior to Christ? Isn't that what is being done by returning to the Law which is now obsolete and fulfilled by Christ with his death? Why?

If Christians want a day in which to worship, all days were created by God and worship is never limited to any day. The early Christians soon after the Resurrection began meeting to sing praises on the first day as it was the birthday of Christianity. The Resurrection was the one and only event that initiated this new religion. Why shouldn't they celebrate the birthday? Aren't all Adventists also Christians? Would they not honor Christ's Resurrection as a very special day?
BTW: "sabbath" was never used in the Hebrew Bible until the Exodus, approximately two millennia after creation.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"The separation of the Law into three parts is a modern, post-Judaic introduction. It was Christians that separated the Law so they could reject those parts that were objectionable while maintaining that the Law was still in force."

Yes indeed, and the person who started that was the Apostle Paul. Paul is admittedly confusing when he discusses the law ('nomos') because sometimes he means the whole Torah, sometimes the 10 commandments, sometimes ceremonial aspects like circumcision, and sometimes he means legalism. You have to be careful you read any passage of his in context.

"BTW: "sabbath" was never used in the Hebrew Bible until the Exodus, approximately two millennia after creation."

If you believe in JEDP, and I recall Elaine you do, you would know that the priests who wrote Gen 1-2a, which concludes in the Sabbath, wrote it after the JE description of the Sabbath in Exodus. Many scholars think the primary purpose of the Gen 1-2a account was to reinforce the purpose and meaning of the Sabbath! 'Sabbath' means 'rest' and Gen 2a says God literally 'sabbathed'.

Anyway, even if sabbath only came about at Sinai - so what? As we have discussed numerous times, the bible is progressive revelation by God. The OT doesn't really have a defined notion of life after death, or in a satan-devil figure, yet it doesn't make those doctrines false, because Jesus affirmed and expounded them in the NT.

William Noel
Reply
6 days ago

Here's my question: How do you reconcile your present concept of "acceptable" Sabbath activities with the ones described in Isaiah 58? On the surface there appears to be a considerable contrast between what many consider a "sabbath rest" and the activities described there as being acceptable to God and making the Sabbath a delight.

How many of you would be willing to pick up a tool and break a sweat to help someone fix a problem on their house on the Sabbath?

I'll give you an example. I lead a ministry team in our church that focuses primarily on home repair/maintenance tasks. The need for such ministry is huge given the large and expanding population of senior citizens who are on fixed incomes and may not be physically able to deal with situations in their homes. It was Sabbath afternoon when I got the call from a widow I had helped before. Her house was being flooded by a broken water line feeding into her toilet. There was no question I could at least go, turn off the water and mop-up the water. But I soon realized stopping there would leave her without running water, a very undesirable situation given her medical situation. What was I to do? Tell her I had to wait until after sundown to complete the job? I had the parts on the truck and in only a few minutes the repair was done. But when I turned the
water back on I discovered another problem: the toilet flush valve was broken and running wide open! Leaving it that way for any length of time would run up her water bill to where she might not be able to buy medicine. Again, I had the repair part on the truck. (That itself was unusual. I keep a few basic plumbing parts on the truck but the probability I would have both items that I needed without having to run to Home Depot was quite low.) Fifteen minutes later the second problem was solved. The threat of damage to her house had been relieved, the threat to her budget removed and she was able to care for herself in a normal manner. Was that not the sort of thing God was talking about in Isaiah 58? If you were in my shoes and found that you did not have the second part, would you have gone and purchased one to resolve the situation quickly?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

There are no "unacceptable" activities based on the calendar. If any are unacceptable, they are unacceptable at all times. One shouldn't need to be guided by the calendar to determine if something is good or not. How can that be logical? Doing good is always right; doing bad is always wrong. But there are people who live by the calendar AND sun set calendars. The Jews observed the sabbath by seeing the sun descend (and if a mountain was in between, sunset was earlier than on a flat plain!

Jean Corbeau
Reply
6 days ago

"How many of you would be willing to pick up a tool and break a sweat to help someone fix a problem on their house on the Sabbath?"

There is a principle here that I'm not sure if I can clearly articulate. Basically, anything that can wait until another day, should wait until another day. If the pipes freeze and are spewing water everywhere, that's an emergency and should be dealt with. If your neighbor has no heat in their house on Sabbath in the middle of winter, you do what is necessary to remedy the problem; whether it be to haul in some wood for them, or call for an oil or gas delivery. Here in snow country, we plow snow on Sabbath. If not, you may not make it to church, and you may need a bulldozer or bucket loader to get you out the next day. But, the idea, promoted in some quarters, that on Sabbath we should be out helping the handicapped and elderly by mowing lawns, painting houses, and other similar activities, is just plain goofy. Why can't we wait until Sunday or some other time to help with these projects? I'll tell you why. Because too many people are jealous of there free time on other days. They need to worship at the sports idol, the TV idol, or maybe the beach idol.

In the case you described, William, I think I would have done as you did, or (if it were beyond my capabilities) at least arranged for someone who knew that they were doing to come at take care of it.

Tim
Reply
6 days ago

Couldn't Jesus have waited a day to heal the guy's withered hand? If so, I don't see the problem with, say, mowing an elderly neighbor's unruly lawn. It's doing something good for another, which was the justification Jesus gave his accusers. Naturally, I do whatever the hell I want on any given Saturday, but that doesn't mean I've punched out in the common sense department. When you guys start bogging yourselves down with legal minutiae, you sound ridiculous.
Jean Corbeau

Reply
6 days ago

Good point, Tim. Jesus could have waited another day to heal the guy's hand. But the man had been suffering for years, and Jesus relieved his suffering. It is always within the law to relieve suffering on Sabbath, or any other day. That's what Jesus meant when He said that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. But a lawn that needs a haircut is hardly in the same category.

It is easy to rationalize on this point. How does one define "good"? It might be good if, in an attempt to build rapport with my neighbor ("friendship evangelism"), I help him get in his hay next Sabbath. And while I'm at it, I might as well have a couple of beers with him at the end of the day. It would go a long way toward showing him that I'm just a regular guy, a real "Joe Six Pack." But it would probably destroy any hope of his being converted because of my witness; because I would have played the hypocrite; I would have compromised the principles that I claimed were so important. Keep the Sabbath holy--unless circumstances dictate otherwise and a noble end will result from it. Expediency wins the day. The ends justify the means.

I've seen the other extreme, as well. I've known people who, if their car broke down on the way to church, would leave it there until the next day, rather than call a tow truck. Well, in this part of the country, in winter, they would be in danger of freezing to death, unless they call for help. They are also likely to have the car towed anyway by the authorities--and maybe pay a fine for abandoning it along a right of way.

I do agree, Tim, that a little common sense is in order, but not in the same way you do. Since you are an unbeliever, I wouldn't expect you to understand.

William Noel

Reply
6 days ago

Tim,

Good point. I think we often fail to do the good God wishes for us to do because we are relying on habit and tradition for guidance instead of seeking God's immediate instruction.

I ask God what He wants me to do right then. His answers are sometimes surprising. No, I haven't mowed anyone's lawn on the Sabbath. But I've gone to the supermarket and bought groceries so they would have food for supper that night and the next couple of days until a check arrived. I've gone to Auto Zone and bought a part for a car so someone could go to their job that night where not showing-up meant losing the job with no other prospect of another job. In each case I felt God's clear direction to go and do what I did. I've also had times where the answer was to not pursue whatever solution appeared most immediate or logical and the reason soon became apparent because God had another answer enroute.

Instead of following rigidly-described human interpretations, I believe we need to allow God some room to use us in ways that may be outside our conceptual Sabbath box.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
6 days ago

Remember the Sabbath Day
http://www.atoday.org/article/1325/blogs/eaton-charles/remember-the-sa...
It's all a problem of scheduling. Fixing broken pipes should be scheduled for Mondays; Bringing in the hay should be scheduled for Tuesday, no matter a terrible storm is predicted to bring several inches of rain; ditto for broken bones or broken air conditioners--those are for Wednesdays; if there is leak in the roof, that is for Thursdays; and Fridays are repairing the stair rails. Now, wasn't that easy and simple?

All is black and white about proper Sabbath observance; never any gray areas; special dispensation is given for all necessary travel condition for denominational employees away from home. Food and hotel rooms and plane tickets are all carefully planned and paid for in advance. No emergencies allowed.

William Noel

Reply
3 days ago

Elaine,

You can schedule a pipe repair for Monday-- so long as it is a sewer line. They create a stinky mess but generally don't spew water and cause increasing damage as the flood spreads. Then there are circumstances where it is essential to have running water at all times, like caring for a seriously ill person at home. We have a situation at home right now where we're caring for my 86 year-old and bedbound father-in-law. If the electricity goes off for more than a few minutes you'll find me running an extension cord from a generator to medical equipment in his room.

It is easy to apply strict rules to the Sabbath until you're in the situation needing a solution. That is why I rely on God's guidance to help me judge what to do, or not do. He usually answers pretty quickly.

Patti Grant

Reply
6 days ago

Elaine, you and I agree on many topics, and I always enjoy reading your thoughtful and reasoned comments, here and on Spectrum. But I cannot bring myself to believe that "it is not a Christian's duty" to keep the seventh-day Sabbath day holy. The Ten Commandments clearly define our relationship to God (1 through 4) and to one another (5 through 10). You state that in the NT there is no mention of the Sabbath. But in the NT in Matthew 5:18 Jesus said "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." God cautions us at least six times throughout the Old and New Testament to not "take away" or "add to" the words of "this book" (the Bible). Deut. 4:2, Deut. 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6, Joshua 1:7, Matthew 15:7-9, and Revelation 22:18 are very clear about what God requires of His people. These texts are absolutely crucial to understanding how God invites us to relate to the law, and are why I believe that all 10 commandments are both necessary and sufficient. I hope it does not appear that I am self-righteously throwing Bible texts at you because I really dislike it when I see people doing that. But for me these texts are crucial with regard to the Sabbath, and I really like Charles Eaton's emphasis on keeping Sabbath as being in a relationship. God bless you and all of us as we seek to do his will.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
6 days ago

Did not God fulfill the Law by His son dying on the cross? What was the meaning of his death and his last
words: "It is finished"? What was finished?
Hebrews 10 carefully details that the Law was a shadow of good things to come. Christ came and took away the first in order to establish the second. How do you explain all these passages that explain the two covenants and which one is now operational and the responsibilities of those who live under the new covenant?

The OT is not the best source to understand what the new covenant entails. Jeremiah wrote of a future new covenant, and Jesus' death inaugurated it and it was not simply a continuation of the old one. Yes, Jesus said that nothing "shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled" so what was fulfilled if nothing changed? When one fulfills the obligation of a law, such as a debt, it has been and is fulfilled, there is nothing more to be fulfilled.

Paul's letters to the new Christians is the best source for understanding the difference between the two covenants rather than the OT or the Gospels; the Gospels were written to explain Jesus in relationship to the OT prophecies; but it was Paul who established Christianity and explained its differences in comparing it to former Judaism and the Law and the sacrifices required under that system. But we now live under the Christian dispensation, not Judaism. None of the texts shown are those written by Paul about sabbath and the Law.

Rev. 22:14: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city" (ASB).

Rev. 22:14: Blessed are those ho wash their roes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates" (RVS).

"Blessed are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the tree of life and can come through the gates into the city" (Jerusalem).

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant....for where a covenant is there must be the death of one who made it. "Behold, I have come to do Thy will. He takes away the first in order to establish the second." Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

The Law once had the important place in Judaism, but Christ's death brought in a new and better covenant. Galatians explains and compares this relationship.

kelley Rogers
Reply
6 days ago

And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless
Remember the Sabbath Day

who takes His name in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

6. You shall not murder.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

Notice to whom the Decalogue was given: the former slaves freed from Egypt.

In the second account of the Decalogue (Deut. 5), "Listen Israel, our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not made with our fathers that God made this covenant, but with us, with us who are here, all living today."

Just as the covenant of circumcision was made exclusively with the Israelites, so was the covenant including the Decalogue: it was never made to all the surrounding peoples, pagans and non-Israelites. So why are we today contending, against Judaism, that it is our covenant and obligation to obey? Where in the Bible is there a command for non-Jews to be observant of the Jewish covenant? Not in the Hebrew Bible, and not in the NT.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
6 days ago

Fine, Elaine. You apparently don't like the 10 commandments. May I have your car? How about the account # to your checking and savings account? If the decalogue no longer applies to Christians, I should be able to disrespect you (you are my elder, after all), rather than honor you as someone from my mother's generation; steal your goods; and maybe even lie about you.

This is silly. We wouldn't even be having this discussion if it weren't for the 4th commandment. I don't know any Christian who has issues with commandments 5-10; and most probably are OK with 1-3. Sorry, Elaine, but
in this case the empress has no clothes.

Rudy Good
Reply
6 days ago

Jean,

No one is saying there is no right and wrong. There was before the law (Rom. 5) and there is after covenant based on law is superseded. The law not only identified things that are right and wrong, but also things that are the requirements of the covenant based on the law. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the old covenant and it is superseded by a covenant that is based on grace and the mind of Christ (through the in dwelling spirit and God's word) as our way to know right and wrong.

There is no Biblical precedent for dividing the law into two parts. Of course there are things in the law that reflect eternal principles and those principles existed before the law and after the law has performed its purpose. No doubt there are principles reflected in the Sabbath command. The question is what does it mean to apply those principles in the New Covenant. For some is is observing one day a week. For some it is that they rest in the work of Jesus, for others it survives in tact and is observed just the way the Jews did. For those in the latter group they should take notice that it is abundantly clear that Jews lost sight of the principles behind the Sanbath command. They had constant conflict with Jesus on this very point.

It seems to me that the two covenants illustrate two ways to relate to right and wrong. The first is needed to establish our need of the provisions of the next. Because we have sinful nature, neither the old or new renders us sinless. But, the second advances us in two ways. First, we are viewed by God as having fulfilled the first through what Christ has done. Second, we are provided resources to begin the replacement of our old heart with a new that does right not because it is required, but because we are renewing our minds to have the mind of Christ and it becomes our natural desire to do right.

The journey toward right doing under the new covenant takes time. Everyone's journey is different. If you believe God is telling you keeping the Sanbath as the Jews is something you should do, then that is what you should do. But, you need to realize that is not set forth as a fruit of the Spirit. If there is a new covenant standard it is to examine our own hearts to see if we have born the fruit.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"There is no Biblical precedent for dividing the law into two parts."

1. It is true the NT never expressly says the Torah is 3. But neither does the NT used the word 'Trinity', and yet almost all Christians believe God is 3 in 1.

2. The OT itself recognised divisions of the Torah, especially recognising the priority of Moral aspects of the Law over ceremonial and civil aspects: 1 Sam. 15:22-33; Is. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:21-23; Mich. 6:8; Ps. 51:16-17; Hos. 6:6. Thus, it is incorrect to say Christians were the first to see such a division between Moral and other aspects of the Law.

3. Jesus Himself recognised the division of Moral and other aspects of the Torah, quoting Mic in Matt
9:13; Matt 12:7; and Matt 23:23. Again, Jesus was not advocating anything new but expanded teachings of the OT.

4. Jesus Himself taught that the Law would not disappear (Mat 5:18-19).

5. To sum up something is not to replace it – it is actually expounds, it like a laser does to a light. Jesus never said the 2 Great Commandments did away with the Law, He said they were the ‘sum’ of the Law & Prophets (Matt 22:37-40). Jesus fulfilled (e.g. ceremonial aspects) and expounded (e.g. moral aspects) of the Law.

6. A large part of the confusion re this topic is because Paul means different things when he uses the word law (‘nomos’). In Romans nomos refers to the Pentateuch (Rom 3:21), the entire OT (Rom 3:19), a principle (Rom 7:23), the Decalogue (Rom 7:7) and legalism (Gal 3:2). It is important to compare ‘oranges to oranges’.

7. God treated the 10 Commandments differently from the rest of the Torah. The Decalogue are Aphoric (general and universal) as a matter of Form Criticism, whilst the rest of the Torah are merely Causatic laws (specific, beginning with ‘if’ and ‘then’). Moreover, example, God wrote with his own hand (Ex 31:18; Deut 5:22) with the tablets going in the ark (Ex 40:20-21); whereas, the rest of the laws were written by Moses (Deut 31:24-26).

8. The OT itself recognizes that the Moral aspects of the Law were applicable to all human beings, including foreigners in the surrounding nations, and not just Jews (Deut 4:5-8; Isa 5:4; Gen 9:5-7). The Sabbath commandment was specifically affirmed as applying to foreigners (Ex 20:10; Isa 56:1-12; Isa 58:13-14; Isa 66:23; – and especially Isa 56:6).

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

Pardon the length. Stephen, this is for your consumption.

1. It is true the NT never expressly says the Torah is 3. But neither does the NT used the word ‘Trinity’, and yet almost all Christians believe God is 3 in 1.

Exactly correct, but there is a reasoned approach that draws that conclusion from what the Bible does teach. Let’s see if your reasoning holds up to scrutiny.

2. The OT itself recognised divisions of the Torah, especially recognising the priority of Moral aspects of the Law over ceremonial and civil aspects: 1 Sam. 15:22-33; Is. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:21-23; Mich. 6:8; Ps. 51:16-17; Hos. 6:6. Thus, it is incorrect to say Christians were the first to see such a division between Moral and other aspects of the Law.

Yes, the OT recognizes different purposes and intents within the law. All these passages are a reminder that sacrifice is symbolic and is superseded in significance by moral principles. It does not create any distinct divisions in the law.
3. Jesus Himself recognised the division of Moral and other aspects of the Torah, quoting Mic in Matt 9:13; Matt 12:7; and Matt 23:23. Again, Jesus was not advocating anything new but expanded teachings of the OT.

Yes, Jesus makes the same distinction between the importance of that which is merely symbolic and that which is based on moral principles. What commandments does Jesus refer to in Matt: 23:23? The weightier matters of the law do not correlate to certain specific commandments so I cannot see how you would use this statement to identify divisions in the law.

4. Jesus Himself taught that the Law would not disappear (Mat 5:18-19).

This is a very misleading abridgement of Jesus teaching. He said it would not disappear until fulfilled. That of course is subject to interpretation, but at the very least it implies that the law will exit until its purpose is fulfilled.

5. To sum up something is not to replace it – it is actually expounds, it like a laser does to a light. Jesus never said the 2 Great Commandments did away with the Law, He said they were the ‘sum’ of the Law & Prophets (Matt 22:37-40). Jesus fulfilled (e.g. ceremonial aspects) and expounded (e.g. moral aspects) of the Law.

I have no idea how this supports your argument. If these two commands can sum up the law and prophets then how is that an argument for the division you defending? It suggests to me that Jesus saw it as indivisible at least for the Jews. I agree that there are principles behind the law that will never be abandoned or diminished in God’s purpose for humankind.

6. A large part of the confusion re this topic is because Paul means different things when he uses the word law (‘nomos’). In Romans nomos refers to the Pentateuch (Rom 3:21), the entire OT (Rom 3:19), a principle (Rom 7:23), the Decalogue (Rom 7:7) and legalism (Gal 3:2). It is important to compare ‘oranges to oranges’.

The law is a schoolmaster. It teaches us about the nature of our sin and our need for a Savior. It is not the ultimate definition of truth or righteousness. Part of the education process departs knowledge and part of it teaches us how to absorb and retain knowledge. The process of learning will last a lifetime, but I don’t need to be confined to the structure of school to continue my learning. I may continue utilize some of the techniques, but many of aspects of formal education disappear when am no longer involved in formal education. I don’t know of anybody who gives themselves grades on their learning process outside of formal education.

I think you are right Paul has different attitudes or perspective regarding the law depending on what issue he is focused on. I don’t think that you have offered any evidence that this fact suggests we should divide the law in parts. His different perspectives have more to do with the purpose and context from which Christians (not Jews) need to view the law and there is no doubt that the law . I don’t know many people who would argue the Decalogue is to be excluded from Paul’s comparison of the law to a schoolmaster and yet this clearly illustrates the transient nature of law.

7. God treated the 10 Commandments differently from the rest of the Torah. The Decalogue are Aphoric (general and universal) as a matter of Form Criticism, whilst the rest of the Torah are merely Causatic laws (specific, beginning with ‘if’ and ‘then’). Moreover, example, God wrote with his own hand (Ex 31:18; Deut 5:22) with the tablets going in the ark (Ex 40:20-21); whereas, the rest of the laws were written by Moses (Deut
31:24-26).

Yes, God did do something quite special to inaugurate the 1st covenant and there is no doubt the 10 commandments were especially foundational to the first covenant. Don’t believe many would quarrel with the assumption that this is the part of the law (torah) that most clearly reflects fundamental moral principles with the possible exception of the Sabbath command which is described as a sign between God and his chosen people. The question is the ongoing role of law in imparting and understanding of God’s will after God came in the flesh.

I think Jesus and Paul make it clear that it is obedience to the indwelling Spirit that is the legacy Christ left to believers. We would not expect the Spirit to contradict the foundational moral principles, but we expect more precision and for context to be considered when the spirit translates those principles to life’s circumstances. Writing the law on our hearts certainly does not mean we will have them embedded in our memories like a computer ROM with data. It surely means that it will become second nature to comply with the fundamental moral principles. It is a hint that a written code of law will become obsolete.

Again we confront the question: Is the Sabbath a sign of the covenant (based on law) that was applicable until something better than the law would come. That the Sabbath symbolizes the rest in Christ work to fulfill the law does not seem like a ridiculous concept to me. Just saying there are other plausible and righteous ways to interpret the same information different from you do.

8. The OT itself recognizes that the Moral aspects of the Law were applicable to all human beings, including foreigners in the surrounding nations, and not just Jews (Deut 4:5-8; Isa 5:4; Gen 9:5-7). The Sabbath commandment was specifically affirmed as applying to foreigners (Ex 20:10; Isa 56:1-12; Isa 58:13-14; Isa 66:23; – and especially Isa 56:6).

No one would argue that God did something stupid and meaningless in establishing the first covenant with Israel. It was indeed supposed to demonstrate that God was good and seeking and obeying His will was in mankind’s best interest. If there is such a thing as the foundational moral principles that are behind the law and that God plans to write on human hearts, then of course they are good for all people.

Nor would I argue that God added a bunch of additional requirements for the Israelites that had no significance in his plan to redeem mankind. The sacrificial system and all of the Mosaic laws were important to establishing the nation of Israel that is the source of the OT scriptures, the Messiah, and salvation. And according to the apostles the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of God in the flesh inaugurated.

Sabbath applies to the strangers/foreigners “within your gates” or those who have joined to the Lord. This obviously refers to a period under which they would be embracing the old covenant.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"Of course there are things in the law that reflect eternal principles and those principles existed before the law and after the law has performed its purpose."

I do agree with this statement, which really is saying all human beings are bound by natural law, however we define that.
Arguably this whole debate is rather pointless because both ‘sides’ ultimately rely on ‘natural law’ or the ‘Eden principle’. Jesus espoused in His discussion on divorce that Christians should live according to how it was ‘in the beginning’ (Matt 19:4,8). All human beings are ultimately judged by this natural law, even if they have never heard of God, Jesus or the Torah (Rom 2:14-16).

My view is that all the Decalogues are aphoristic laws that are the basis for natural law. They are quite different from the causatic laws of the ceremonial and civil laws of the rest of Judaism.

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

Agree, but natural law is not something that is codified. This really is two different ways of using the word "law". Natural law defines the way things work from which codified laws could be developed for particular context.

"Whatsoever a man soeth that shall he reap". "Perfect love casteth out fear". These can be articulations of natural law (along with a great many other things).

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"Second, we are provided resources to begin the replacement of our old heart with a new that does right not because it is required, but because we are renewing our minds to have the mind of Christ and it becomes our natural desire to do right."

I agree again.

1. However, the OT itself says that under the new covenant the Law of the old covenant will not be abolished – just transformed into the hearts of human beings (Jer 31:33). And what Law then is written on our hearts – it is obviously the Moral aspects of the Torah. The onus is on others to prove otherwise.

2. As to those who argue an OT precept has to be specifically named and reaffirmed in the NT to have any application is absurd. For example, there is no provision in the NT reaffirming the OT moral command prohibiting cursing the deaf (Lev 19:4). Does this mean we can curse deaf people – God forbid! Likewise, it is absurd to suggest that the commandments against blasphemy or Sabbath-keeping, both of which are not much mentioned in the NT, are no longer binding because they are not explicitly reaffirmed.

3. To sum up something is not to replace it – it is actually expounds, it like a laser does to a light. Jesus never said the 2 Great Commandments did away with the Law, He said they were the ‘sum’ of the Law & Prophets (Matt 22:37-40). Jesus fulfilled (e.g. ceremonial aspects) and expounded (e.g. moral aspects) of the Law.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"If you believe God is telling you keeping the Sabbath as the Jews is something you should do, then that is..."
what you should do. But, you need to realize that is not set forth as a fruit of the Spirit."

Disagree. I think you are mixing concepts. The fruits of the Spirit are really to do with the 2nd Limb of the Great Commandment, that 2nd Table of Stone written in our hearts, to love one another.

I think you forget the 1st Limb, which is to love God with all our hearts. True worship to God is an integral part of that, as is having no other God, having no idols, and respecting God's name. Sabbath keeping is part of true worship of God.

You can try to rationalise it away, and say what you think God wants, ignoring what He actually says. Worship of God is important, and is the undercurrent of half the Bible (the other half being about man's inhumanity to man). In Gen, Adam fell because he wanted to be like a god rather than worship God. Abraham, in some ways the first, was called to establish true worship. In Revelation, the central issues between Christ and Satan is about worship.

True worship of God is the heart of what it means to be a follower of Yahweh. Sabbath is the foundation stone of true worship, but one commonly forgotten, which is why God reminds us to remember it...

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"If there is a new covenant standard it is to examine our own hearts to see if we have born the fruit."

Rudy, the final thing I would say that I understand your concerns about legalism, with many Adventists acting extremely legalistic. However, Christ showed how to truly keep the Sabbath, and condemned the Pharisees who kept it in a legalistic manner. But Christ never said anything to abolish the Sabbath as a true act of worship, nor did any Apostle in the NT. Rather, Christ made clear He is Lord of the Sabbath, and it was made all mankind, not just Jews.

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

Well, it is all fine and good to say Jesus showed them how to truly keep the Sabbath. But, other than he attended synagogue and did not observe the stringent Sabbath rules we have no idea how Jesus kept the Sabbath. There is no one case that I can recall where he is described as eliminating something that was work. Other than doing good on the Sabbath, what example did Jesus set for Sabbath keeping?

You are making a lot claims that just can't be backed up from what is actually said in scripture.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

Sorry one last comment in my tirade - much apologies. Paul says we are to be living sacrifices for Christ. Don't you think in our 24 hr consumeristic lives, that sacrificing our time for God is about the greatest thing we can sacrifice for God today?
When Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, don't you think mankind could benefit from the Sabbath today more than any time in human history? When mankind is conquoring space itself, don't you think Abraham Herschel had a point in noting that only through the Sabbath can we truly worship God, the I AM above time itself?

William Noel  
_Reply_  
6 days ago

Stephen,

What better use of our time can we find than drawing close to God and learning from Him?

Rudy Good  
_Reply_  
5 days ago

If Paul believed that a fundamental part of offering ourselves as a living sacrifice was Sabbath keeping. Why is not there not one word in any of his epistles about the need to keep Sabbath or how to keep Sabbath? I am quite sure there are people who observe Sabbath who do not truly worship and there are people who do not observe Sabbath who truly worship.

I believe our need to codify God's will appeals to our needs not God's. If you are blessed by Sabbath keeping then you should do it. If your testimony of that blessing draws someone into the same blessing then so be it. Amen and amen. Can it ever be true worship if we feel we have no choice. If you insist that complying with law is the obligation of a follower of Christ can there ever be another motive. Is there a better way to please God than faith that binds us to Christ and allows his Spirit to dwell in our heart? We all say there will be "Sunday" keepers in church. Well, how in the world can that be? Can Christians ever claim to be really blind to the fourth commandment? This is only possible if we realize there are other sincere mindsets. Do you really believe that only Sabbatarians have ever truly worshipped God?

Rudy Good  
_Reply_  
5 days ago

meant to say ""Sunday" keepers in heaven"

Preston Foster  
_Reply_  
5 days ago

Hebrews 4: 1-11; a few words about 7th day Sabbath observance.

Rudy Good  
_Reply_  
5 days ago

Show me a reference here to the weekly Sabbath rest instituted in the Ten Commandments.
There is a reference in verse 4 to God's entering His rest on the seventh day. But, if you read the verses prior to this it is abundantly clear the author is NOT referring to a weekly rest.

Thereore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have acome short of it.

2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but athe word 1they heard did not profit them, because 2it was not united by faith in those who heard.

3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,
   “aAs I swore in My wrath,
    They shall not enter My rest,”
although His works were finished bfrom the foundation of the world.

THIS IS THE WHOLE PROBLEM, ADVENTISTS HAVE BECOME BLINDED BY THEIR SABBATH OBLIGATION. THEY CAN NO LONGER READ SCRIPTURE WITHOUT DISTORTING IT TO SUPPORT THE SABBATH. SO THEY ARE WILLING TO EMBRACE LEGALISM AND DISTORT SCRIPTURE TO HANG ON TO THE SABBATH OBLIGATION.

MAYBE THER IS A WAY TO HAVE SABBATH AND LEAVE BEHIND THE SABBATH OBLIGATION.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
5 days ago

Rudy,

Such long training and education by teachers and preachers wearing SDA glasses that when they read such texts, by some form of magic, they interpret it entirely different from all other Christian theologians. Is it in the drinking water, or is there a job for an opthalmologist?

I empathize with all those who had the same experience, as I was always taught that such NT texts confirmed that sabbath was practiced by the Christians and they taught the new converts to obey the fourth commandment. Despite any texts supporting sabbath observance as taught for new Christians, we were simply to assume that by going to the synagogue to hear apostles preach, that became obedience and their acceptance and practice of worship on the seventh day.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Elaine, don't assume all of us have just adventist teachers and preachers.

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

Elaine,

For some of my generation the water stopped working and it is even more impotent for subsequent generations.
I don't understand why what Adventists insist is a pivotal issue in the great controversy is so ambiguous in scriptures.

Why is the Eden Sabbath command missing? Where is the evidence of patriarchal Sabbath keeping? Where is the Pauline Sabbath keeping admonition to the Gentiles? Where is any reference to Sabbath keeping after the cross? Why is there no instruction for Gentiles regarding Sabbath keeping? Why does the author of Hebrews simply urge gathering together instead of worshipping on Sabbath? Why did Paul forbid judgment regarding sabbath days if he really meant sabbath feast days?

Had the Bible authors been inspired to include a couple of these disambiguations it would not be so easy for anyone to interpret the Sabbath as applying only to the Jews.

kelley Rogers
Reply
6 days ago

Most of the commandments are self-explanatory, and our conscience is also a very good guide (that within voice telling us right from wrong)

Further, we live in a day vastly different than biblical days (ie) and so most of us do not have cattle that we put to work for us, likewise, while being obedient to the rules of God, and most of us having a conscience we use to help guide us from right and wrong (I don't think a commandment is necessary to tell us that to murder is wrong, most of us would never hurt anyone, not even in anger and its just an inborn aspect (ie) not all dogs fight to the death of one another, unless TRAINED, thier inborn mechanism allows one to walk away in an "untrained" dog fight.

We must also live with good common sense, some have it, some work at it and we live and learn, very simply put.

We have left it to mankind to keep track of our days, we assume these days have never been miscalculated even before a hand watch was discovered (because) someone, was ALWAYS on watch keeping track of the days hours and minutes.

We must use our good common sense and conscience we are born with along with good moral upbringing in all we do, and of course GOD.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

Please explain how one's conscience would tell him to worship, and on a specific day, and if this person was born in central China 100 years ago.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

I could ask the same questions about the other 1-3 of the Decalogue. But that is not to suggest that mankind
shouldn't worship 1 God, prohibit idols or respect God's name. As CS Lewis described (largely following other ancient philosophers), in the heart of every person is a God-shaped hole.

Part of that God-shaped whole is the notion that ultimately there is only 1 God. You actually see this in a number of polytheist societies, including ancient Greeks (who believed in the 'Original Cause' or 'The Good') or even Hindus (many of which believe the various Gods are just a manifestation of 1 ultimate Brahman God).

As to the Sabbath, part of the 'God-shaped hole' is true worship of God. Anthropologically, part of true worship is the notion of sacred space and sacred time. Even Australian Aborigines, who had no concept of a weekly Sabbath, did have the notion of an illinear, sacred time in 'The Dream Time' or Songlines etc.

It is the job of Christians to help all tongues, nations and people better understand and worship God better. Many Australian Aborigines in my country include both Elders who are 'Lore Men' of their traditional culture and 'Law Men' of the Bible. Many say that the Bible merely confirms or expounds notions that were present in their indigenous culture.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

To Elaine, Rudy and others who above suggest the Sabbath is no longer binding because they reject the ‘orthodox’ division of the Torah into Moral, civil and ceremonial categories, and say the Law no longer abounds, contrary the official creeds of Christianity:

1. It is true the NT never expressly says the Torah is 3. But neither does the NT used the word ‘Trinity’, and yet almost all Christians believe God is 3 in 1.

2. The OT itself recognised divisions of the Torah, especially recognising the priority of Moral aspects of the Law over ceremonial and civil aspects: 1 Sam. 15:22-33; Is. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:21-23; Mich. 6:8; Ps. 51:16-17; Hos. 6:6. Thus, it is incorrect to say Christians were the first to see such a division between Moral and other aspects of the Law.

3. Jesus Himself recognised the division of Moral and other aspects of the Torah, quoting Mic in Matt 9:13; Matt 12:7; and Matt 23:23. Again, Jesus was not advocating anything new but expanded teachings of the OT.

4. Jesus Himself taught that the Law would not disappear (Mat 5:18-19).

5. To sum up something is not to replace it – it is actually expounds, it like a laser does to a light. Jesus never said the 2 Great Commandments did away with the Law, He said they were the ‘sum’ of the Law & Prophets (Matt 22:37-40). Jesus fulfilled (e.g. ceremonial aspects) and expounded (e.g. moral aspects) of the Law.

6. A large part of the confusion re this topic is because Paul means different things when he uses the word law (‘nomos’). In Romans nomos refers to the Pentateuch (Rom 3:21), the entire OT (Rom 3:19), a principle (Rom 7:23), the Decalogue (Rom 7:7) and legalism (Gal 3:2). It is important to compare ‘oranges to oranges’.

7. God treated the 10 Commandments differently from the rest of the Torah. The Decalogue are Aphoric (general and universal) as a matter of Form Criticism, whilst the rest of the Torah are merely Causatic laws.
(specific, beginning with ‘if’ and ‘then’). Moreover, example, God wrote with his own hand (Ex 31:18; Deut 5:22) with the tablets going in the ark (Ex 40:20-21); whereas, the rest of the laws were written by Moses (Deut 31:24-26).

8. The OT itself recognizes that the Moral aspects of the Law were applicable to all human beings, including foreigners in the surrounding nations, and not just Jews (Deut 4:5-8; Isa 5:4; Gen 9:5-7). The Sabbath commandment was specifically affirmed as applying to foreigners (Ex 20:10; Isa 56:1-12; Isa 58:13-14; Isa 66:23; – and especially Isa 56:6).


10. Enoch and Noah walked with God – even though they had no Torah (Gen 5,6 and Heb 11). Abraham was said to keep God’s decrees – even though he had no Torah (Gen 25:6). Adam didn’t obey God, and introduced sin into the world (Rom 5:12) – even though he had no Torah. What Law then existed?

11. The Bible doesn’t tell us the Law is bad; it tells us it is holy and its commands are holy and right and good (Rom. 7:7,12,13) and profitable to teach (2 Tim 3:16, keeping in mind the ‘scripture’ here is the OT). The law (‘nomos’) Paul says is good and holy is the Decalogue, made clear in Rom 7:8 when Paul quotes ‘You must not covert’ (Ex 20:17). How then can it be said that the Law has been done away with?

12. Paul categorically states that the Law hasn’t been abolished! (Rom 3:31; Gal 3:21).

13. The NT makes clear that Law and Gospel are not 2 separate dispensations or time periods. Rather, people in the OT had the Gospel and were saved by Jesus’ blood through righteousness by faith and not works, although it was only promised through symbols (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4; Gal 3:8; Rom 1:1-2 and Heb 4:2).

14. The OT itself says that under the new covenant the Law of the old covenant will not be abolished – just transformed into the hearts of human beings (Jer 31:33). And what Law then is written on our hearts – it is obviously the Moral aspects of the Torah. The onus is on others to prove otherwise.

15. As to those who argue an OT precept has to be specifically named and reaffirmed in the NT to have any application is absurd. For example, there is no provision in the NT reaffirming the OT moral command prohibiting cursing the deaf (Lev 19:4). Does this mean we can curse deaf people – God forbid! Likewise, it is absurd to suggest that the commandments against blasphemy or Sabbath-keeping, both of which are not much mentioned in the NT, are no longer binding because they are not explicitly reaffirmed.

16. The Early Church in NT was dealing with circumcision, table practices and other Jewish ceremonial practices, which were barriers to Gentiles converting. The NT was not concerned with Moral aspects of the Law, and where Paul found immortality, especially sexual immorality, he was quick to condemn it. Blasphemy and Sabbath-keeping are not mentioned much in the NT because they no longer apply but precisely the opposite – because they were already much acceptable by the Gentile converts and thus no issue worthy of debate. God-fearing Gentiles were already keeping the Sabbath before Paul preached his radical message against circumcision (Acts 13:42, 15:21, 17:1-4, 10-12, 16-17 and 18:4).

17. Those who deny any implicit division of the Torah between Moral and Jewish ceremonial aspects end up applying a de facto division anyway; otherwise, their view leads to absurdity. The NT does explicitly reapply a number of Commandments (Eph 6:2; Jam 2:8-12).
18. Arguably the whole debate is rather pointless because both ‘sides’ ultimately rely on ‘natural law’ or the ‘Eden principle’. Jesus espoused in His discussion on divorce that Christians should live according to how it was ‘in the beginning’ (Matt 19:4,8). All human beings are ultimately judged by this natural law, even if they have never heard of God, Jesus or the Torah (Rom 2:14-16).

19. Whilst tradition is not convincing in itself, it is interesting to note that all major Christian denominations hold the orthodox division of the Torah into Moral, civil and ceremonial aspects. The notion that the whole Torah was done away with at the cross is actually a relatively new idea attributed to John Darby in the 19th Century, and to various heretical Gnostic sects before it.

20. However way you look at it, the Sabbath is part of the Moral law important to the worship of God. As such, as applies today. Jesus never taught that Sabbath keeping was abolished; rather, He taught true Sabbath-keeping.

Kevin Riley
Reply
6 days ago

Stephen

As a theoretical system your proposal works well. The problem comes when it comes to actually dividing the laws into those categories. If you have to split laws, split sentences, and ignore the reasons the Bible gives for those laws in doing so, then I would suggest your system, while logical, is unworkable. I need to check on this, but I believe we have traditionally rejected natural law as a basis for interpreting Scripture. Perhaps it would be worth while considering why we did that. The only workable division is between the 10 commandments and the rest, or between those fulfilled by the cross and those not. Too many 'civil' laws are given explicitly religious explanations for us to put forward 'civil' as a discrete category.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"I need to check on this, but I believe we have traditionally rejected natural law as a basis for interpreting Scripture."

From the GC's Biblical Research Institute:

"In a manner uncommon among Protestant groups, the laws of nature have a place in Adventist thinking. Although imperfectly understood by mankind and impacted by the presence of sin, their study is valued as a means of knowledge about the intent and methods of God. Such attention encourages scientific investigation and has led to an understanding of health and healing that is virtually unique among churches.

Although the principal basis of Adventist belief rests on the Scriptures and the church's outlook is more faith-based than liturgical, its understanding makes provision for elements of natural law, limited in scope but recognized as a part of the creation initiated by God." (emphasis added)
I meant the term ‘natural law’ in its broadest, generic sense. There is huge debate within Christendom re what ‘natural law’ means exactly. I am not suggesting an exact definition, just the broad concept.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

I should just add Adventist invoke a 'natural law' type argument to justify abstaining from pork and other 'unclean meats', even though they are ceremonial or civil laws that otherwise are done away with at the Cross and not ritually unclean (Mark 7:19):

The concept that the Decalogue was abolished by the death of Christ is a relatively recent."

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago


Yes, it does to the degree it reflects eternal moral principles. “Thou shalt not kill” … “Thou shalt not murder” … “Thou shalt not be angry with your brother.” So, which of these truly exposes sin? Jesus gave the latter command because there was more sin to expose. The Ten Commandments are not last word in defining and exposing sin. They are a tool … we now have something better. That does not stop us from using the old tool if is used appropriately.
10. Enoch and Noah walked with God – even though they had no Torah (Gen 5,6 and Heb 11). Abraham was said to keep God’s decrees – even though he had no Torah (Gen 25:6). Adam didn’t obey God, and introduced sin into the world (Rom 5:12) – even though he had no Torah. What Law then existed?

Well, what law did exist? For Adam it was Do not eat of the a specific tree. One can surmise that that command was arbitrary to provide a test of obedience. Adam had the natural law written on His heart and daily unbroken communication with God to know his will. I do not believe Adam or his immediate descendants needed a law of rules. If they did it certainly could not be the law that Paul says entered at Sinai that sin may abound.

11. The Bible doesn’t tell us the Law is bad; it tells us it is holy and its commands are holy and right and good (Rom. 7:7,12,13) and profitable to teach (2 Tim 3:16, keeping in mind the ‘scripture’ here is the OT). The law (‘nomos’) Paul says is good and holy is the Decalogue, made clear in Rom 7:8 when Paul quotes ‘You must not covert’ (Ex 20:17). How then can it be said that the Law has been done away with?

You misunderstand my position. The moral principles on which the law is based are not done away with. To the degree the law reveals these principles it can always serve its purpose. Although, Paul in the first chapter of Romans makes it clear that men are guilty without the law. He obviously presumes there is something besides the law that convicts sinners. Coveting was wrong before there was an explicit law against it and it will always be wrong. So, there is nothing bad about a law that forbids it. There is something bad about a follower of Christ who does not grow beyond the motives to comply the law.

12. Paul categorically states that the Law hasn’t been abolished! (Rom 3:31; Gal 3:21).

It has a purpose and continues to serve that purpose. It will ever remain true that God gave the law to reveal righteousness and sin. But, in Rom 8:3-4 he clearly explains that the law was “weak” when it came to producing righteousness in human beings and God sent His Son so that what the law could not do would be accomplished through the Spirit which is meeting the requirement of law. So, that which the law required is accomplished not through obedience to the law, but obedience to the spirit (walking in the Spirit). This is God’s method. Satan would love to have us wait for the law do what it can not do.

13. The NT makes clear that Law and Gospel are not 2 separate dispensations or time periods. Rather, people in the OT had the Gospel and were saved by Jesus’ blood through righteousness by faith and not works, although it was only promised through symbols (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4; Gal 3:8; Rom 1:1-2 and Heb 4:2).

Once again, God did not make a stupid mistake in the first covenant. It was a necessary part of His whole plan. Jesus is the lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. The first covenant required a symbolic enactment of the death of that lamb. That ended with the end of the first covenant and has been meaningless with the inauguration of the second covenant. That is a pretty clear delineated in periods of time. Surely, we all know that Jesus believed all of the Old Testament scriptures pointed to Him. The law is a shadow of God’s character and His standard of righteousness that is revealed in its fullness in Christ. This is very much the same as the sacrificial system is a shadow of Jesus atonement on the cross.

14. The OT itself says that under the new covenant the Law of the old covenant will not be abolished – just transformed into the hearts of human beings (Jer 31:33). And what Law then is written on our hearts – it is obviously the Moral aspects of the Torah. The onus is on others to prove otherwise.

You are repeating yourself now. If you are happy with that language, then that is fine. The law is transformed. It
will no longer be a set of finite rules, but principles written on the heart. It is transformed into something that is NOT KEPT AS AN OBLIGATION. It is the natural motive of the heart.

15. As to those who argue an OT precept has to be specifically named and reaffirmed in the NT to have any application is absurd. For example, there is no provision in the NT reaffirming the OT moral command prohibiting cursing the deaf (Lev 19:4). Does this mean we can curse deaf people – God forbid! Likewise, it is absurd to suggest that the commandments against blasphemy or Sabbath-keeping, both of which are not much mentioned in the NT, are no longer binding because they are not explicitly reaffirmed.

I agree with this idea. And I argue the converse is true. There are many moral specifics that God would expect of us those who walk in the Spirit that are not specifically forbidden or required in the Torah. And there are some moral issues in the torah which are clearly out of synch with what we would assume are moral requirements for our time. (For example the death punishment for breaking certain laws that probably was appropriate then, because Israel was a theocracy.) Bottom line: it is absurd to propose that the explicit laws of the Torah are applicable for all times and circumstances. Do you propose that Sabbath breakers should be put to death today? If so, by whom? If not, why not?

16. The Early Church in NT was dealing with circumcision, table practices and other Jewish ceremonial practices, which were barriers to Gentiles converting. The NT was not concerned with Moral aspects of the Law, and where Paul found immortality, especially sexual immorality, he was quick to condemn it. Blasphemy and Sabbath-keeping are not mentioned much in the NT because they no longer apply but precisely the opposite – because they were already much acceptable by the Gentile converts and thus no issue worthy of debate. God-fearing Gentiles were already keeping the Sabbath before Paul preached his radical message against circumcision (Acts 13:42, 15:21, 17:1-4, 10-12, 16-17 and 18:4).

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit, God’s presence in the Christian era, is mentioned. Yes, Paul condemned behavior and almost always appealed to the Christians to imitate Christ and live to glorify him instead of appealing to law keeping as the motive. He condemned things that were not mentioned in the Torah such as the way they behaved during the Lord’s Supper. Those condemnations appear to have the same weight as those that parallel Torah laws. By what authority did he extend the law? Answer: by the Holy Spirit which is the interpreter of law and scripture to those in whom he dwells.

17. Those who deny any implicit division of the Torah between Moral and Jewish ceremonial aspects end up applying a de facto division anyway; otherwise, their view leads to absurdity. The NT does explicitly reapply a number of Commandments (Eph 6:2; Jam 2:8-12).

What does this mean?

18. Arguably the whole debate it rather pointless because both ‘sides’ ultimately rely on ‘natural law’ or the ‘Eden principle’. Jesus espoused in His discussion on divorce that Christians should live according to how it was ‘in the beginning’ (Matt 19:4,8). All human beings are ultimately judged by this natural law, even if they have never heard of God, Jesus or the Torah (Rom 2:14-16).

No, it is not pointless, because as much as you may claim you are not a legalist as long as you appeal to law keeping as the motivation for righteous living for those who have the option to walk in the Spirit, you are promoting legalism. Legalists are never satisfied with a standard of righteousness that leaves them without an authority to pass judgment on others. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and there is never a danger that he will not do it. People use any excuse to embrace their unrighteous desires. This includes the indulgent attitudes that
legalists claim are the reason the law is needed, but it also includes the legalists who are satisfied with the righteous standard of the law over that of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

19. Whilst tradition is not convincing in itself, it is interesting to note that all major Christian denominations hold the orthodox division of the Torah into Moral, civil and ceremonial aspects. The notion that the whole Torah was done away with at the cross is actually a relatively new idea attributed to John Darby in the 19th Century, and to various heretical Gnostic sects before it.

I don’t think it is quite accurate to simplify the problems of the early church (that have become known as antinomian) to an issue of the abolishment of the law. The Gnostics basically tried to do away with the need for a standard of righteousness. It did not matter whether it was natural law, Torah law, or what some have called the Law of Christ. They did not see a need to bridle the lusts and selfish desires of the flesh. When some speak of law not being abolished they mean there is still a standard of righteousness. I agree and so would Paul. In fact, in Romans 5 he points out that sin and death reigned before the law entered. But, there is a better and greater standard of righteousness that has superseded the law and Paul appealed to that standard in almost every epistle.

20. However way you look at it, the Sabbath is part of the Moral law important to the worship of God. As such, as applies today. Jesus never taught that Sabbath keeping was abolished; rather, He taught true Sabbath-keeping.

So, how is this more than a statement of your interpretation?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Rudy, I did agree pretty much with most of your comments. I am not suggesting legalism, as much as you might claim. Perhaps it sounds that way because I am addressing Antinomianism.

I do agree tha the Decalogue, in the negative sense of the Tables of Stone, are primary there to point out sin - they do not save.

I do agree that under the New Covenant, we shouldn't have to be taught and follow any law, because it should be written in our hearts. I recall Jeremiah also talks about how under the New Covenant we don't have to go teaching our neighbours because we innately just do what is right.

People still follow the Decalogue, but one written by God's hand on their hearts, not on tables of stone. Whereas people previously saw 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' they know instead in their hearts 'Thou shalt love they wife with all your hearts and as yourself.' Anyway who has the latterin their heart need not be taught the former.

Under the New Covenant the Law is relational. That is what Jesus was perhaps trying to say when He talked about the 2 Great Commandments.
My other main point though is that under the New Commandment, we don't just have principles of good relations with our fellow humans written on our hearts - it is also meant to transform our relationship with our Creator God.

Part of that proper relationship with our Creator God is to realise He is One (hence the first commandment), above space (hence the commandment re idols), above time (hence the commandment re Sabbath) and above human control (hence the commandment about using His name).

Back to the Sabbath. The seventh-day Sabbath is important under the New Covenant as a manner of relationship and worship to our Creator God.

Moreover, the Sabbath command isn't just about resting 1 day in 7, it is also about working 6 day in 7. The Amish could probably teach us a thing or two about how important good honest work 6 days in 7 is for one's spirituality and relationship with God, as bizarre as it may sound.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

The first four commandments of the Decalogue are only applicable in a theocracy. Of course, Hammarubi's Code was also written for a theocracy giving homage to their God.

Civil laws can be commanded by a government but conscience and religious beliefs cannot be commanded, although actions may be, but to go through motions (as once commanded in Roman government), did not demand believing in the gods, merely "acting" which saved one from severe punishment.

Moral laws define our relationship with other humans: stealing, lying, murder, etc. are only actions harming others. This is why the first four cannot be moral laws as they are theocratic: one's relationship with one's god, not affecting other humans. Moral laws are usually innate: all humans know that stealing, killing others, etc., is wrong: Cain knew his guilt when confronted by God, yet there was no written law to which he could refer.

Observing any day could never have been known by listening to one's conscience; nor can it be properly called "immoral" for the millions who do not worship on that day. If we believe that God gave us intuition and a conscience, for humans to impose a particular worship practice as giving honor to God is replacing conscience and our God-given reasoning ability and telling us not to trust our own hearts, but look outside for rules made by a group of people thousands of years ago, claiming that their god gave it to them, and no other peoples.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

"The first four commandments of the Decalogue are only applicable in a theocracy."

Are you trying to tell me that having no other gods but God, and not making idols, nor blaspheming His name, is only for a theocracy? Best go out and get me a statue of Marduk then! With respect, I doubt many Christian, Jews or even Muslims would agree with that statement.
I am not quite sure I understand your point about the Hammarubi Code? Yes, the Exodus Laws of the Covenant were also influenced by the ancient near east, such as the vassal and suzerainty treaties of the Assyrians and Hittites, especially the Hammurabi, Ur-Nammu and Lipit-Ishtar laws. Of course we expect the Bible to be written in a way that utilising the style, form and imagery of the culture of the ancient Levant.

"Moral laws are usually innate...Observing any day could never have been known by listening to one's conscience"

I understand the logic, but the same could applied against worshipping 1 God, or making idols, or blaspheming the name of Yahweh when someone say in ancient Aboriginal Australia would have known of none of these things. And yet Jesus makes clear that we aren't just to love our neighbours - we are to love God with all our hearts.

Even when people don't quite know of 1 God (#1 commandment), or His image (#2 commandment), or His name (#3 commandment), or how best to worship Him (#4 commandment), we do see many ancient and modern cultures having glimpses of similar cultures. In these glimpses we see the Moral law written in their hearts.

Kevin Riley
Reply
6 days ago

The enforcement of the last 6 commandments on the basis of 'God says so' is also only appropriate in a theocracy. The enforcement of any of them (not to murder, not to bear false witness) on the basis that such laws are necessary for society to operate is a different matter. I don't believe any society has ever enforced 'thou shalt not covet', and laws forbidding adultery and enjoining respect for parents are not universally considered to be necessary, and neither apply in most secular democracies. A theocracy can impose whatever it believes to be God's will. A secular democracy is not and should not be concerned with God's will.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

Kevin see my response below to Elaine. I think we are mixing concepts here. The notion of 'morality' as expressed in the Decalogue, 2 Great Commandments and natural law (i.e. Jesus' Eden principle) still obviously applies. For example, I might say that to not care and respect one's parents is immoral - and many atheists, agnostics and people of other religions and cultures would probably agree. But that is not to say we should apply the ceremonial or civil-sundry aspects of the Torah, which were for the governing of ancient Israel, which could demand such insubordination of a child be punished by death throw stoning.

This whole discussion by Elaine and you proves my point. As Christians, we implicitly do make divisions in the Torah and do say we don't is nonsense. As I said in my 20-point mini-treatise, that is not new, because they even did that in the OT.

To say there is no morality as expressed in the aphoristic principles espoused in the Decalogue is nonsense. To say that we enforce morality through the causatic edicts of the Israelite theocratic sundry codes is also nonsense.

Stephen Ferguson
Elaine, let me make it really easy for you. Should all human beings:

1. Worship 1 God?
2. Make idols?
3. Blaspheme the name of God?

WHY?

Now I am not talking about salvation, and I am not suggesting not doing these things will mean people won't go to heaven. Obviously in the history of the whole world, most people didn't even really know of these things, or only had glimpses of these things. What I want to know that if as Christians we should preach these 3 things about God to the rest of the world?

And if the answer is yes, why not number #4 - worshipping God by keeping His Sabbath?

Elaine Nelson

Reply
5 days ago

Stephen, to answer your questions, should all human beings:

Worship one God? That depends on whether they truly believe there is only one God and his name may be Allah, Yahweh, or Elohim.

Make idols? All humans make idols; some are of stone, some they buy at automobile and jewelry stores, etc.

Blaspheme the name of God? It would not be wise to do so in many parts of the world if you value your freedom and life.

These are ridiculous questions, just like: "when did you stop beating your wife."

To ask should humans do certain things implies that they should, and could be prevented from doing them. My question is "Why"? should anyone try to prevent anyone from doing all those things you list? None affect me in the least way, and that is what religious freedom is all about: freedom to worship, freedom not to worship; freedom to have one god or many gods and freedom to have no gods.

Why should Christians not preach these 3 things about God? Because it's bassackwards. Before teaching about either doing certain things are refraining from things, people must be taught the significance of those acts and whether they wish to choose to observe them. Without being "convinced in their own minds" it is all mindless performance without thought and reason.

Stephen Ferguson

Reply
5 days ago

Elaine, I don't think they are riddiculous questions but go to the very heart of Christianity (or monotheism in
general). When God commanded Abraham, what if he had asked the questions you asked? No one was going to prevent him or punish him for not worshipping 1 God, because the whole world worshipped many gods. He worshipped 1 God because he had an intimate relationship with Yahweh, not because someone would punish him for not doing so.

It is all about relationships - not just rules. Proper relationship with our Creator God is to realise He is One (hence the first commandment), above space (hence the commandment re idols), above time (hence the commandment re Sabbath) and above human control (hence the commandment about using His name).

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

It is all about relationships - not just rules. Proper relationship with our Creator God is to realise He is One (hence the first commandment), above space (hence the commandment re idols), above time (hence the commandment re Sabbath) and above human control (hence the commandment about using His name).

This doesn't make any sense (sounds rather pleasant, though, like some sort of bizarre poetry) and frankly, you sound more than a little bit crazy.

Where do you get "above space" from the commandment against idols? Couldn't that just refer to the fact that god is living, not an inanimate object to worship? And "above time?" If he's "above time," why is it so important to point out that he created the world in six days, and that he "rested on the seventh?"

And I'm not sure how my exclaiming "[insert Lord's name here, since even "typing it in vain" would probably get this damn thing moderated]" when I stub my toe has anything to do with being subject to or above human control.

Can you expand on this at all?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

Tim,

I'm with you: How in God's name can someone claim that "proper relationship" when that phrase cannot be found in the Bible, and no where is a relationship with God mentioned other than he is so far above us as to be worshiped from afar (eliminating any possible time or space). Does God reside in the clouds, above the stars? Even Job questioned and God essentially told him he had no right to question. It is a simple statement God is and there is no place, nor time, nor any human concept where he can be located.

All this is some gobbledygook that must have arisen in a mind trying to convey undeveloped thoughts and simply blurted them out without thinking. For when a thinking person reads them they make no sense whatsoever. Surely, you can express your thoughts in a much better way.

Jean Corbeau
Reply
4 days ago
Like it or not, some of these things cannot be explained to unbelievers (especially those who do not wish to believe, or who have rejected the truths of Scripture), because they are spiritually discerned.

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

You've been making this comment a lot lately, and it serves no purpose. I'm an intelligent, educated, sane person despite having left the church. "Heh, forget it, you're an unbeliever and just can't understand" is both rude and adolescent. If your position is reasonable and has merit but you're unable to explain it to somebody like me, who, I might add, -was- a believer for 25 years, that's your failing, not mine. Fix yourself or don't, but please knock off these nonsensical jabs. Thanks.

Stephen Foster
Reply
4 days ago

Tim,

As you may have noticed, although we represent two ends of the Bible-believing spectrum in this forum, we certainly (surprisingly) seem to be in agreement fairly often.

Well, not this time, because in fairness, you have not hesitated to indicate when someone “sounds crazy” or stupid, or whatever; so you shouldn’t be so thin-skinned when someone (like Jean) says that you wouldn’t understand something that is understood/accepted in faith.

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

I'm sorry, Foster, but when have I once said that I thought somebody sounded crazy or stupid and then failed to state specifically to -what- in the post I was referring? When have I, like Jean above, ever stated that somebody wouldn't understand as a response to a specific query?

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

And as for "spiritually discerned" "truth," I used to read the same statements from sources and subjects whose "truth" involved God giving the green light to kill innocent people. You may also recall a few people who blew themselves up or flew planes into buildings who said the same damn thing. So pretty please, with sugar on top, forgive me if I ask a few follow-up questions when people puke that line.

Stephen Foster
Reply
4 days ago

Who ever said anything about you not stating specifically to what in any post you may have had reference when saying that someone sounded crazy or stupid, Tim? That wasn’t my point at all man.
My point was that you do not hesitate to point out when someone sounds crazy to you, or stupid; so how can you complain that Jean seems condescending?

As someone pointed out, this site is a glass house full of stone throwers.

It is understandably annoying that he doesn’t think you can understand things of faith. Maybe he’s actually saying/implying that no one can explain what is understood in faith.

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

I don't care if he's condescending; I'm aware that I can be, too The difference is that when -I'm- condescending, I make sure to have a point. Hence, I don't just type "you're stupid" and then hit post. "You wouldn't understand" is a copout. If I talked about a vision from the Holy Jabberwocky that came to me in a dream last night, you might suggest that I sound wacky and ask for more information. If I responded that you wouldn't understand (because you don't believe in Alice or something), what good does that do you or anyone else? And then suppose somebody jumps in and says "I've read Through the Looking Glass, and trust me, some things can only be understanded by faith in Alice." C'mon. My question to Ferguson remains.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

Jean,

Do you honestly expect people to understand you when your default position is:

"Like it or not, some of these things cannot be explained to unbelievers (especially those who do not wish to believe, or who have rejected the truths of Scripture), because they are spiritually discerned."

In plain English translation: "Hw can you expect to see what I see because you don't accept my paradigm which is based on my belief in Scripture and only the spiritual can understand it."

Tim

Elaine Nelson
Reply
6 days ago

Yes, I did mean that the first four only apply and can be enforced in a theocracy. There are a few theocratic governments today, Saudi Arabia may be one, where the Islamic laws are enforced. But in all democratic governments like the U.S. we live under a democratic republic, not a theocracy. Thus, the government cannot enforce obedience or worship to any god which can be true in a theocracy. We should all be thankful for NOT living under a theocracy, otherwise, any religious laws that we did not want to obey, we could be punished. This is the whole "end times" situation predicted in SDA prophecy.

In a theocracy, blasphemy is an offense punishable by death--again, some nations in the Islamic countries. Blasphemy is a religious law functioning under a theocracy.
"Are you trying to tell me that having no other gods but God, and not making idols, nor blaspheming His name, is only for a theocracy?"

This is exactly what I am protesting. When has anyone been found guilty of blasphemy in the U.S.? Or worshiping idols? These are only enforceable in a theocracy. We should all thank God every day that we are not living in a theocracy. The same thing for all the other 10 commandments given to the Israelites. No one can be punished for not obeying those laws. If they applied to U.S. citizens, we would be stoning adulterers, stoning sabbath breakers and adulterers.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

I think you are confusing the notion of the Moral law of the Decalogue, which are the universal basis for morality, with the sundry laws of Moses, which were only for the governing of the theocratic state of Israel.

This is my whole point! There needs to be and is an implicit division between the notion of 'Morality', which is to say something is right or wrong or a 'sin', and which continues to bind Christians, and the notion of religious ceremony and religious theocratic edicts, both of which do not bind Christians.

For example, I believe it is immoral to commit adultery - as a basis both in the Decalogue, summarised in the 2nd Great Commandment, and found in natural law in Eden (per Jesus statement on divorce). Don't you believe that? However, I don't believe we should enforce the theocratic civil/sundry laws of ancient Israel, that require adulterers to be killed.

Again, one can see that any attempt to say the Torah as a whole simply does not apply simply leads to absurdity. Of course the Moral aspects still apply. It is the ceremonial and civil/sundry aspects you are talking about, and I agree with you that they no longer apply in a secular democracy.

Kevin Riley
Reply
6 days ago

The moral aspects may apply on an individual level, but nothing written in any scripture can be the basis of civil law in a secular democracy purely on that basis. Murder is forbidden for a number of reasons, as is lying under oath, but the fact that those rules are found in the Bible is not one of those reasons. What God did or did not say matters to us as individual believers. But that is not how we form laws as a secular community - even if believers form a majority of the law makers.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
6 days ago

Yes I agree. I worship 1 God, don't make idols, honour my parents, don't cheat on my wife and keep the Sabbath because on an individual level, I believe the Moral Law of the Torah (in what form it happens to be in) continues to apply. Whilst the State should apply morality according to its own cultural circumstances, which is the meaning of the Noahide Covenant, each State need not apply the ceremonial and civil edicts that were for
the theocratic government of Israel alone.

Once again, there is an implicit division between Moral aspects of the Torah, which continue to apply to individuals in perpetuity as generalised aphoristic laws, compared with communal-state ceremonial and civil laws, which were for the Jews living in a theocratic state with a working sacrificial Temple system.

Back to the Sabbath, I keep the individualist, Moral aspects of the seventh-day Sabbath as found in the Decalogue. I don't keep the ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath (such as holy days such as Passover and Yom Kippur) and civil aspects (such as the stoning of Sabbath-breakers). I have not been exposed to any argument that convinces me Christians are no longer bound by the Moral aspects of the seventh-day Sabbath as found in the Decalogue.

William Noel
Reply
6 days ago

Stephen,

It sounds like you will be in harmony with the counsel given by Paul regarding arguments in the church about what portion of the ceremonial laws should be imposed on the gentiles. My paraphrase of his counsel goes like this: "If you get a blessing from it and believe it draws you closer to God, do it. Just don't require similar observance of those things by people who do not have the same heritage to know those other sabbaths and regard them in the same way as you do."

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

William, I wasn't talking about the ceremonial law. I was saying Christians are not bound by the ceremonial law, which includes Feast Days. I agree if Christians want to keep ceremonial Sabbaths, such as Passover and Yom Kippur, as the World Wide Church of God used to teach, go for your life - but I don't do it. If you think Christmas and Easter are 'holy days' go for you life - but I know their origins are pagan.

I keep the seventh-day Sabbath because it is part of God's eternal Moral Law, which reflects His character. The human-God relationship is important, and we do all have a God-shaped-hole for a monotheistic God. Part of the true worship of that monotheistic God Creator is to realise He is above space (hence the commandment re idols), above time (hence the commandment re Sabbath) and above human control (hence the commandment about using His name).

It isn't just about any Law in a legalistic sense. It is about relationships - with God and our fellow human beings.

Preston Foster
Reply
6 days ago

In the New Covenant, the law is written on our hearts. There is plenty of evidence that the Old Covenant law was fulfilled at the cross -- for believers (Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44, John 1:17). The law and its wages apply to those who are not in Christ -- who kept it perfectly, for those who accept Him. Those who are not in Christ and His righteousness (to the law), will pay the penalty for breaking the law.
This is, in no way, a recipe for lawlessness. Those who live in the flesh do so without regard to the law or its boundaries. God's law, whether engraved in stone or written on hearts, is disregarded (Romans 8: 5-9).

The work of righteousness in our lives is God's work, not ours (Philippians 1:6). Thinking that we can obtain righteousness by keeping the law is delusional, self-righteous, and non-biblical (Romans 3:20, Galatians 2:16). The work that God requires of us is, according to Christ, faith in Christ (John 6:29-29).

Those who claim that we are bound by the Old Covenant law are challenged to explain Exodus 35:1-3, much less Hebrews 8:13, Hebrews 9:15, 28. The Sabbath remains without the force of the law (Hebrews 4:4-11). The law that enforced ended with the Old Covenant (2 Corinthians 3: 6-7, 13).

The law cannot save us. Jesus has. The purpose of the law is to point out sin -- and to lead us to Christ (Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 3:15-25). Past that point, we are to live by faith in the Spirit, not by the law. This the Bible says explicitly, time and again.

Can someone explain to me why the law -- which we have all broken -- is upheld, while the blood and grace of Jesus Christ -- that delivers us from the penalty of the law, is minimized? What's in it for us, sinners?

The Sabbath is a gift, given to us at creation. Like any gift, it is to be savored in thankfulness to the Giver, not out of obligation (the opposite of thankfulness).

Joe Erwin
Reply
5 days ago

Let us hope that we all agree that we are responsible for our own behavior. For the believers, their choices are between them and God. Believers and unbelievers are responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Joe Erwin
Reply
5 days ago

Perhaps I should add that I mean we are all responsible for our actions in the real and tangible world. Believers are responsible for the consequences of their actions in the spiritual world. Unbelievers in the spiritual dimension have no responsibility for anything in the spiritual world.

The conflict comes when believers blame unbelievers for consequences the unbelievers do not even believe to be real. Of course, unbelievers are also sometimes unkind in blaming believers for not practicing what they claim to believe.

But we all still have direct responsibility for our behavior that harms others. Believing that God will forgive you for harming others, only matters when you find ways of making up to victims for the harm you have done to them. So believers and unbelievers can (and generally are) responsible in the real world for the real harm they do. And if there is no other way of correcting the problem, prevention through punishment or separation is in order.

The thing is, you are not responsible for my errors, just as I am not responsible for yours--unless I could have
helped to prevent you from doing harm.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
5 days ago

Laws without attendant penalties are mere suggestions. Which is why the Decalogue could only be the Israelites guides because there were stiff penalties for disobedience. Their system was a theocracy until they adopted kings and judges.

"Natural Laws" are innate in the human being. No one has to be constantly reminded that murder is both wrong and illegal; or that stealing is wrong and illegal. But there is no natural law that distinguishes one day from another: no indication by the moon, sun, or stars. The setting apart of one day is an "unnatural law" and no amount of words can change that fact: if someone is in a coma for a 3-10 day period, unless he is told what day of the week it is, he could not determine it by any means unless someone told him when he lost unconsciousness and the day he regained it: it is not a natural condition that can be determined innately or by intuition.

Stephen Ferguson

Reply
5 days ago

"Laws without attendant penalties are mere suggestions."

So if I could do something bad, but could guarantee there was no penalty, it wouldn't be breaking any law? I don't believe that. Anyway, there is no lawlessness without penalty. The penalty may be hidden, it may be internal, but even a dictator who kills his people with impunity pays some sort of price, even if it is a price inside himself in what his humanity.

Re whether the Sabbath command is or os not part of natural law, I have already said my piece about that. I agree the human-God relationship is not as innate in our conscience as human-human relationships.

But the human-God relationship is important, and we do all have a God-shaped-hole for a monotheistic God. Part of the true worship of that monotheistic God Creator is to realise He is above space (hence the commandment re idols), above time (hence the commandment re Sabbath) and above human control (hence the commandment about using His name).

It isn't just about any Law in a legalistic sense. It is about relationships - with God and our fellow human beings.

Elaine Nelson

Reply
5 days ago

"there is no lawlessness without penalty." Where is the a law without penalty?

If you do "something bad" why would it be breaking law if there was no law and no penalty? Do you know of laws with no penalties for breaking or disobeying them?
Some things may be "bad" such as gossip but there is no penalty because there is no law. Saying something is "bad" may be hurtful but laws are arbitrary and made by governments. Different governments and different times result in various laws; i.e. driving on the right side of the road in the UK is illegal, but is lawful in the U.S.

Biblical laws were given for a particular people at a particular time and place and cannot arbitrarily be mandated or even expected to be observed thousands of years later under entirely different conditions. Just reading all the laws in the Torah should be sufficient to realize that they cannot apply to people today.

How can you substantiate or give evidence to your remark: "we do all have a God-shaped hole for a monotheistic God"? Contrary evidence can be found in many cultures: Greek, Roman, Hindu. The three monotheistic religions are not the only nor the oldest.

One's relationship with God is personal and each individual must decide how that relationship is nurtured and maintained. There is no book that can possibly perform that task as the Bible is only one book that speaks of God but not the only one; even if it were, there are many various groups who worship and honor that God in various ways. Has God limited man's mode of worshiping?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Elaine, you are making my points for me about there being an implicitly difference between the Moral aspects of the Torah and the prescriptive ceremonial and sundry laws for theocratic Israel.

Surely the Ten Commandments have some relevance or benefit as aphoritic principles - that is generic and universal statements? Surely it is these principles that are written on our hearts under the New Covenant. Surely they are universal statements of morality, something that is above post-modernist thinking that suggest there is no absolute morality?

They really are quite different from the 613 rules of the Mitzvah, being descriptive arbitrary laws for the governing of theocratic Israel. Where the Ten Commandments are aphoristic, these ceremonial and sundry laws or causatic, being 'if x happens then y punishment should occur.' I totally agree with everything you said about these laws in the Torah being arbitrary and made up for people thousands of years ago in different cultural conditions. I am not suggesting they have any application for Christians today in modern Western secular democracies.

One might compare say the Preamble to the US Constitution (aphoritic) with the individual operative provisions (causatic). One might also compared the Ten Commandments to say the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or some other international treaty (aphoritic), but which has no legal status until each country incorporate those provisions into their own nation by specific statute (causatic).

Again, for the avoidance of doubt I am not advocating that any causatic part of the Torah is binding on Christians. I am just saying that the aphoristic, generic and universalistic moral principles as set out in the Ten Commandments, and which reveal God's character, still have some relevance to Christians today. I also submit that the Ten Commandments are just one form of God's eternal moral law, which can exist in various guises, whether natural law in Eden, 2 Great Commandments or in our hearts.
All I am asking is this. Do the Ten Commandments have relevance or benefit as aphoritic principles - that is generic and universal statements? Yes or No?

Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

You do know that the 10 commandments are included in the 613 mis.wot? I also wonder if the other 603 are really all 'arbitrary'?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Kevin, perhaps say something a little helpful on the subject. Sometimes it is easier to criticize than it is to be constructive.

Do you agree with my central proposition that the 10 Commandment, including the seventh-day Sabbath, still has relevance for Christians today? I have tried to say it in a number of different ways, including looking it from both a technical and relational aspect, and open to different formulations.

Why do I appear to be the only one sticking up for the Sabbath here? Is like a total re-run of the debate against the pro-Gnostic Marcion of Sinope (85 - 160 CE), who tried to purge Christianity of any traces of the OT. There certainly seems to be a Marcion-like flavour to these discussions, and we really could be back in the 2nd Century.

Re the 613 laws of the Mitzvah, if you read my comments above, I make it quite clear that to the extent that certain commands relate to moral principles they still apply. The example I gave was the command against cursing the deaf (Lev 19:4) - look above. However, I agree with Elaine insofar as that this command is still a causatic law, primarily for the governing of Israel, and whilst one can find universal moral truths in that command, its exact application is dependent upon individual cultural circumstances.

P.S. Mitzvah is defined in wikipedia at the following link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitzvah

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

Stephen,

Your statement that you "are sticking up for the Sabbath" tells it all. That is exactly what I believe has derailed Adventism. The goal of sticking up for the Sabbath prejudices our reading and understanding of scripture.

And the next step is to see people who don't agree with you as promoters of evil. I for one am not slightest bit interested in purging the OT from Christianity. But, neither do I want a Christianity devoid of the freedom in Christ that Paul promoted so enthusiastically. It is Absurd to relate to the OT as if it can still viewed and interpreted the same as before God came in the flesh.
Adventists, when backed into a corner regarding the Sabbath, always reveal something that is frightening. They cling to law keeping as the primary way to achieve righteousness. They are not willing to recognize the weakness of some of their arguments or the ambiguity of scripture. Argument they would make if the shoe were on the other foot they just ignore.

Is it possible that what God wants most are people who can be true to the scriptures even if when we discover it does not provide incontrovertible proof of a cherished belief? Could it be that Adventists are called to bear witness to the value of Sabbath without it being presented as a legal obligation? Could it be that the Sabbath is a test of our true motives and our desire to please God? Could it be that there are two ways to relate to Sabbath; as a blessing and gift from God to be enjoyed as the led by the Spirit or as an obligation that provides us with a way to declare ourselves truer believers?

Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

I have Maimonides' commentary on the Mis.wot and have studied it, so I know what they are and what is in the list as generally accepted by Jews. And I can assure you the 10 commandments are included.

I don't believe you can in practice divide the law as you suggest. Certainly not if you want to retain any authority for the biblical text as we have it. I agree the Sabbath still exists, but not because it is in a section of the law that remains. The whole law remains, but our relationship to all of it changes. None of it is 'arbitrary' in any way that I understand that term. An application of principles that are not always spelt out, perhaps even the 10 or the two applied to a concrete situation, but not arbitrary. I see some danger in retaining only those laws which we see as having some relation to moral principles. First of all because I don't believe there are any that don't, but also because the argument of what is moral can quickly descend in to a circular argument. It is late, and obvious even to me that my medication is no longer working, so I will try to return too this in the morning.

You are no more alone in defending the Sabbath than Elijah was in defending God, so sleep well :)

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

Stephen, your comment:

"universalistic moral principles as set out in the Ten Commandments, and which reveal God's character, still have some relevance to Christians today."

True. But the first four can never be "universal moral principles" as they would force people to worship a god and on a certain day. "Universal" means applicable to everyone at all times. Such principles are the civil laws against murder, stealing, etc., but cannot be those about religious worship.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

And if anyone wants a fantastic look at the Sabbath, from a non-legalistic perspective, but rather from the
perspective of how the Sabbath is a lynch-pin in formulating a proper relationship with your Creator God, I wholly suggest famous Jewish theologian Abraham Herschel's book 'The Sabbath'.


I dare you to read this book and then try and tell me keeping the Sabbath has no value to a good relationship with God or is just legalistic.

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

Can you point out where I said or implied "the Sabbath has no value". This is the flaw that has overwhelmed Adventism. If the Sabbath is not obligatory then it has no value. Who says?

William Noel
Reply
4 days ago

Stephen,

We can learn a lot from Jewish scholars. Somewhere in a box left stored after moving I have a copy of Alfred Edersheim's classic "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah." Also very informative. Maybe you can find it in a used book store somewhere.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

Rabbi Heschel gives his own impression of the meaning of Sabbath. But for an entirely different view, go to the Orthodox settlements in Israel and observe how they keep sabbath--according to the Torah.

How can one claim to observe a day which is given, with all the accompanying duties, and reject most of them and still claim to be observing the sabbath of the Bible? The Bible is most specific. Either one keeps it as God outlined, or one does not. Do humans have the right to modify God's commands?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

As a question of relationships, you can say all you like that God doesn't care that the seventh-day Sabbath doesn't matter. You might even try to say that worshipping Him alone, and not a pantheon of pagan gods doesn't matter, or trying to Him in a box by making images of Him doesn't matter (which many Christians arguably do today with UFC Jesus), or try to control God through invoking His name in some sort of magic formular doesn't matter (which many Christians arguably do with Deliverance Ministries/Propserity Gospel). But I think those things do matter to God.

I also think spending the time God set aside to be with Him, and to be with each other, is important. I can miss my 'date night' with my wife and say, 'But I can love you as much every day', but it does matter to my wife. I can miss her birthday and our anniversary and say, 'But every day is as good as another', but my relationship
with my wife suffers.

The seventh-day Sabbath is important because it is one of four key principles pertaining to worshipping and building a stronger relationship with your Creator. I agree many Adventists (like Jews before them) make the Sabbath a burden, in the same way I can make 'date night' a chore with my own wife. But this is not how it should be.

Rudy Good  
Reply  
5 days ago

But, it becomes a chore when it is viewed and presented as an obligation.

Stephen Ferguson  
Reply  
5 days ago

Yes. And so can wedding anniversaries with my wife when I adopt a terrible attitude towards it. But currently, and I hope always, that I will cherish wedding anniversaries because I love my wife with all my heart, not because it is some obligation that will get me in trouble if I don't remember it.

Perhaps one might say under the Old Covenant, God says 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...' but under the New Covenant, God says 'Remember the weekly anniversary of my creator power, because I am your Creator God, who you love...'

Rudy Good  
Reply  
5 days ago

Obviously, you are persuaded you have an appropriate relationship with the Sabbath that is not diminished by obligation. However, is possible that your rhetoric will have an unintended effect on those who are persuaded that they are required by law to keep the Sabbath? Maybe all the missing disambiguations that I mentioned above are not missing by accident.

Certainly you don't believe that our view on the Sabbath determines whether we do or do not truly love God. Don't you believe that if people who truly love God see a convincing testimony that Sabbath keeping adds a special dimension to their relationship to God they will reject the idea out of hand.

Think about the thief on the cross who was saved. There is no reason to assume he was not from a Jewish background. He appears to have turned to God whom he recognized in Jesus hanging on the cross next to him. How many Sabbath had he truly kept before this? How many did keep after coming to God? Does it matter? We can speculate about what he might do had he not died? But, he was saved because of His trust and faith in Jesus Christ and he never kept a Sabbath to prove his trust and faith.

The new covenant changes the game to emphasize that it is the faith and trust that are the key. This was always God's plan, but human weakness requires a lawful penalty to awaken us from our sinful slumber. The good news is that God pardons and fulfills the law requirements for us. We are awakened to the freedom of his grace and a life that allows us respond to the Spirit and the transformation He makes possible.
I know people who have experienced awakening and are undergoing this transformation and they simply are not convinced or convicted of the Adventist view of the Sabbath. Perhaps someday they will see it different, but all the logical arguments of obligation do not persuade them. And frankly, when I study history and take the Adventist blinders off when reading the scripture I can see why they may not be. In the end I think it is the value that one finds in the Sabbath that is important. There is no credit to be gained. No one will be saved because they kept the Sabbath because they were believed they were obligated to do so.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Rudy, I think you make good points. The thief on the Cross may never have kept any Sabbaths, but He found the Lord of the Sabbath, which is the main thing.

I have anniversaries with my wife, and they are important to continue and revitalise my relationship with my wife. But they pale in comparison to that first day we fell in love.

That is how I read Hebrews 4. Paul is not saying the seventh-day Sabbath is unimportant or done away with. He is just making the point to these Jews, who as his audience would have been faithful Sabbath keepers, that a seventh-day Sabbath doesn't provide the same type of eschatological rest found in Christ. We have that eschatological rest the day we have a true born again experience, whatever day of the week it is, which Paul says is today.

Another analogy might be to compare baptism to foot washing. Foot washing is important, and Peter gave an important warning to Peter about neglecting it (which ironically most denominations do), but it is only a reminder of the principal rite of baptism.

It is important to have perspective and right motive. In some ways, the SDA Church has in many quarters become the church of the footwashers, rather than Church that spreads the Gospel and baptises.

The thief on the Cross found that eschatological Sabbath on that very day Christ assured him of salvation. If the thief had lived on, the weekly Sabbath may have provided him with a ritual reminder of that rest, but a reminder is hardly the same as the same thing. Incidentally the thief did rest literally (i.e. he died) as the Sabbath began, if you recall his death was expedited by the Romans.

Both Revelation and Isaiah tells us that even in heaven and the new earth, there will be a cycle to worship, both monthly and weekly, even though God is with us. I guess the next time the thief keeps the Sabbath, it will be then.

Rudy Good
Reply
4 days ago

I like your foot washing analogy. You have connected with some of what I have on my mind and found a very effective way to articulate it.

An intersting side note. We are confined to time at the present. In the future that might be different. Clearly the instruction to the Israelites puts an importance on time based appointments in our relationship with him. That
part is is reiterated plainly after the cross when author of Hebrews reminds us to gather together. I think that is a principle that applies as long as we are time bound. Whether we will be time bound and in the heaven/new earth is another question. But, I am sure the principle will have some relevant expression for our worship.

Joe Erwin
Reply
4 days ago

Just yesterday I was thinking of the "footwashing" ritual--as I scrubbed my feet after weeding in the garden. I recalled the individual differences in the way people performed this task. Some, I recall, did the footwashing with warmth and humility and even real tenderness and affection (in a good way, not some sort of fetishistic fashion). Others were very mechanical in their approach, hardly engaging or acknowledging the person whose feet they touched. In a way, it seemed to be a metaphor for much more than baptism, and the potential was there for a real expression of Christian warmth.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

"Both Revelation and Isaiah tells us that even in heaven and the new earth, there will be a cycle to worship, both monthly and weekly, even though God is with us."

How does anyone know the cycles of time in heaven? Sabbath was ONLY given for this earth with its specific cycles determined by its own moon and sun. Only on earth time can a seventh day be observed as the daily, weekly, and monthly cycles as are all completely different even on our nearest planets. What does a "7th day" mean on an unknown destination called "heaven" when we know nothing about its location? How can there be new moons? Maybe 10 moons? How long could a year be? Reading the Bible so literally introduces many more questions that call for answers. Strongly "defending" sabbath brings up questions that need answers.

Isaiah's prophecy was speaking of the restoration Israel was hoping for in the 2nd temple where they could worship as they had before their exile. Reading the whole text in Isaiah reveals that "on their way out they will see the corpses of men who have rebelled against me, their worm will not die nor their fire go out; they will be loathsome to all mankind."

Would you be willing to interpret that last verse? Also, why aren't New Moons being celebrated along with sabbath if they are to be celebrated in heaven?

Elaine Nelson
Reply
4 days ago

"but under the New Covenant, God says 'Remember the weekly anniversary of my creator power, because I am your Creator God, who you love...'

Hmmm... A most unique interpretation, and a personal one. Where in all of the NT writings about the New Covenant did such an idea originate? No wonder there is such a strong defense being made for universal sabbath observance by Christians. Never mind that the NT never sets aside any day of worship; never instructs Christians about the 7th day as the holy day to be preserved by them; never a word that Christians became obligated to observe sabbath once they were baptized. Amazing
assumptions!!

Rudy Good
Reply
5 days ago

First "Don't" should be "Do"

Timo Onjukka
Reply
5 days ago

At the risk of losing a few of the leftbrainers here, I am going to throw out an idea; the garden, as a foretype, of heaven.

Man, in the image of God (dare I say the word? I do mean, we are called heirs-sons and daughters in likeness). Sabbath, as a foretype of "rest" (note that heaven will be utterly remade-and is not a land cursed by thorns and thistles). In the human sense, a God "resting" really makes no sense!

Marriage as a foretype of unity, "as I and the Father are one, so two you and I can be one" (do not ask mne to give you a human example in words what this may look like to mortals)

The sanctuary as foretype of Heavens temple.

I mention just the concept of foretypes to bring my musing home. If the revelation feast is a never-ending wedding feast-one we are to celebrate in perpetuity-is it not entirely possible that these chronos-limited arguments of ours are quite absurd? Who here today can say what the real meaning of perpetual sabbath in heaven, in God's time (kairos) means to man in our chronos-limited (as well all the other limitations of arguing meanings of obscure scrolls and parchments and documents written over many centuries in ancient tongues by non-eyewitnesses and interpreted a hundred ways to sunday). Seems we each ought to make up our minds about it, live rightly according our own moral compass, and neither guilt nor deride any one elses choices. God doesn't choose for them, or you-why do you choose for others, or not, intellectually honestly, choose for yourselves? Seems willingness to dialog these issues, instead turning it into some sort of contest, saya alot about our own fears of our own (oft inherited) beliefs.

Anyone else read
The Promise of Peace: Dare to Experience the Advent Hope by Charles Scriven

Joe Erwin
Reply
5 days ago

Not to trivialize anything said here, but will there really be no artichokes in heaven? Too bad....

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Not sure why there wouldn't be. Of course we have such a poor idea of what, where or how heaven will be, and what, where or how we will be changed, that who knows? I try not to be dogmatic about it.
Who knows, even if there are artichokes, who says we will be able to eat them, or anything for that matter? Wouldn't eating something require death - even if it is plant death. Perhaps getting off topic, but even if you are a YEC, you have to accept there was death before the Fall, even if it was the death of once living plant cells.

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

That, and the fact that the intake of substances -- eating -- leads to excretion of waste. Unless we want to believe that we'll have magical bodies when we're magically brought back to life that magically utilize all parts of everything we eat. :) Heck, why not?

William Noel
Reply
4 days ago

Joe,

Well, it is a thistle and when God cursed the ground after Adam and Eve sinned, he declared that it would produce "thorns and thistles." Will God change the plant so we can have them to enjoy? Will He give us enough other good things so we won't miss them? I'll be happy just to be there and find out.

Tim
Reply
4 days ago

Post-ressurection saved person: "Er, where the hell are all the roses?"

God: "Roses had thorns, if you'll recall. Ergo, I got rid of 'em."

Joe Erwin
Reply
4 days ago

Well, I do not have to worry about what heaven will be like, because I have no intention of being there. I expect to spend the rest of eternity rotting and being recycled, with no consciousness of it. But, of course, as some others here seem to believe, I could be one of those unfortunates who spends eternity intensely suffering the pain of everlasting hellfire torment--not God's doing of course, just the natural consequence of my rebellious stubbornness.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

You won't find many Adventists suggesting you will be burning in hell forever.

If there is a God and an afterlife, I think we will be very, very suprised. I like to think that God has a soft spot for those who are prepared to ask hard questions in their search.

Joe Erwin
I agree that the promise of "heaven" or "paradise," as well as the threat of "hell" or "everlasting torment," are not very well understood--scriptural references aside. My best guess is that these concepts have been used to manipulate people into accepting religion. So, there was this wonderful pristine garden, where everything was wonderful and all the fruits and plants were nice and edible (except the forbidden one). And outside, the environment was hostile and forbidding--full of thistles and other useless and awful weeds.

Your point about plant death is well taken, Stephen. There is, of course, much we do not know and can never know. But there are also some things we can at least come close to knowing, and we have the potential of living evidence-based lives.

To return to your thoughts on the law and its division. The problem as I see it is not only that the divisions are not explicit in Scripture, but that there is no explicit mechanism of getting from the commandment in Scripture, along with its motivation if it is given, to the 'new' understanding that is not ad hoc and subjective. We make the clean/unclean laws - which are clearly holiness laws in the Bible - into 'health laws'. God did not say 'do not eat X because it will cause disease'. He said 'X is unclean (defiling, separating from God), do not eat it or touch it'.

We say, 'God would not forbid something that was good for us, or command what was harmful for us, so we will refrain from eating unclean foods - even though they do not have a direct spiritual effect'. Does the same reasoning apply to all prohibitions? Obviously not. As a generalisation, if it doesn't involve gratification of the appetite (food, sex, etc), then we simply ignore it. Why do we believe that God views homosexuality as being eternally an 'abomination', but all the surrounding laws - sowing fields with more than one crop, making garments of more than one material, etc - are now non-events? If God told us not to do it, surely it was because it was inherently bad (unhealthy? evil?) for us? God commanded circumcision. Obviously there was some good (beyond holiness) in that or he wouldn't have commanded it. How then can Paul say it no longer matters? Women were commanded to spend a considerable amount of time away from husband and community after childbirth because they were 'unclean'. Why have we not adopted that as a 'health law'. It seems no more nor less a matter of health than eating unclean food. And where is the 'moral' dimension in either?

When Paul says - as he does repeatedly - that we are no longer 'under the law', with an extended treatment in Galatians - what makes you believe that he has in mind a clear distinction between the 'moral' sections and the 'civil' and 'ceremonial' sections. And how do we get not only the Sabbath, but food laws and many others, into that 'moral' section? And if we create a new 'health' section, how do we decide what goes there? How do we decide that homosexuality is basically a 'moral' issue because it involves sex, but many other laws on the same subject are merely optional 'health', 'civil' or 'ceremonial' laws that we can take or leave as we please?

That is why I suggest you sit down with either the 613 mis.wot or the Bible texts they are based on and see if you can divide them into the sections you give, and whether you can come up with reasons why each goes into a certain section that will convince even you. And perhaps find a convincing reason why you know better than
Moses (or God?) which section they 'really' belong to.

I am not arguing against the Sabbath, just saying I don't believe the traditional dissection of the law is a feasible way to defend it.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

Sorry Kevin, do you believe in the seventh-day Sabbath - yes or no?

If yes, on what basis do you believe in the seventh-day Sabbath, and how do you reply to those propositions of Elaine, Rudy and others that it was just something for Jews, and not for Christians?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

“The problem as I see it is not only that the divisions are not explicit in Scripture…”

It is true the NT never expressly says the Torah is 3. But neither does the NT used the word ‘Trinity’, and yet almost all Christians believe God is 3 in 1.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

‘…but that there is no explicit mechanism of getting from the commandment in Scripture, along with its motivation if it is given, to the 'new' understanding that is not ad hoc and subjective.’

The OT itself recognised divisions of the Torah, especially recognising the priority of Moral aspects of the Law over ceremonial and civil aspects: 1 Sam. 15:22-33; Is. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:21-23; Mich. 6:8; Ps. 51:16-17; Hos. 6:6. Thus, it is incorrect to say Christians were the first to see such a division between Moral and other aspects of the Law.

God treated the 10 Commandments differently from the rest of the Torah. The Decalogue are Aphoric (general and universal) as a matter of Form Criticism, whilst the rest of the Torah are merely Causatic laws (specific, beginning with ‘if’ and ‘then’). Moreover, example, God wrote with his own hand (Ex 31:18; Deut 5:22) with the tablets going in the ark (Ex 40:20-21); whereas, the rest of the laws were written by Moses (Deut 31:24-26).

Jesus Himself also recognised the division of Moral and other aspects of the Torah, quoting Mic in Matt 9:13; Matt 12:7; and Matt 23:23. Again, Jesus was not advocating anything new but expanded teachings of the OT.

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

I do not see any of those passages contrasting 'ceremonial' and 'moral' laws, but simply stating that to focus on the ceremonies without the 'moral' dimension negates the sacrifices. As Jesus said 'these you should have done without neglecting the former'. 'Obedience' included sacrifice, and more. Sacrifice without mercy is
meaningless. Tithing without justice and mercy is meaningless. But I would suggest Sabbath keeping without justice and mercy is also meaningless.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

I do think there is a distinction between moral aspects and mere ceremonial aspects, but I do agree with your wide point, including about the Sabbath.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

‘We make the clean/unclean laws - which are clearly holiness laws in the Bible - into 'health laws'. God did not say 'do not eat X because it will cause disease'. He said 'X is unclean (defiling, separating from God), do not eat it or touch it'.’

I agree this is poorly understood by most Adventists.

One should remember that the Law of Moses contained many civil or sundry laws. As generally accepted by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Adventists, these Mosaic Laws were given primarily for the running of ancient Israel and are not binding on Christians today. For example, Adventists would generally agree with the Presbyterian (Calvinist) Westminster Confession of Faith (1643), which states:

19.4 To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people; not obliging any further than the general equity thereof may require. (emphasis added)


The principles found in many of these civil or sundry laws, especially as they relate to unchanging human bodies, such as regulations on infectious diseases (Lev 13) or the disposal of human excrement (Deut 23:12-14), clearly contain universal principles of ‘general equity’. For example, few would argue that as Christians in the liberty of Christ, people with highly infectious diseases should be free to roam the airports of the world – or that we should dispense with proper sanitation, leaving our feces in our living-room floors, on the sidewalk or wherever we may fancy!

Likewise, as noted on the official SDA theological website:

“Health laws are timeless and universal because human bodies continue to function in the same way.” (emphasis added)


God simply doesn’t say things for no reason. Whilst Jesus may have clarified that eating with unwashed hands was not sinful in a moral sense, few Christian parents (of any denomination) would allow their children to eat dinner with filthy hands as a matter of practical living. Jesus Christ was not some kind of Ronald McDonald, encouraging us to eat whatever we like whenever like. Even if something is not morally sinful in negative sense,
this does not mean Jesus was advocating that behaviour in a positive, practical sense either. Rather, the human body is recognised as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:20) and as such, "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

The Bible doesn’t tell us the Law is bad; it tells us it is holy and its commands are holy and right and good (Rom. 7:7,12,13) and profitable to teach (2 Tim 3:16, keeping in mind the ‘scripture’ here is the OT). The law (‘nomos’) Paul says is good and holy is the Decalogue, made clear in Rom 7:7 when Paul quotes ‘You must not covert’ (Ex 20:17). How then can it be said that the Law has been done away with?

Paul categorically states that the Law hasn’t been abolished! (Rom 3:31; Gal 3:21).

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

‘When Paul says - as he does repeatedly - that we are no longer 'under the law', with an extended treatment in Galatians - what makes you believe that he has in mind a clear distinction between the 'moral' sections and the 'civil' and 'ceremonial' sections.’

Paul means different things when he uses the word law (‘nomos’). In Romans nomos refers to the Pentateuch (Rom 3:21), the entire OT (Rom 3:19), a principle (Rom 7:23), the Decalogue (Rom 7:7) and legalism (Gal 3:2). It is important to compare ‘oranges to oranges’.

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

So, how do you decide which meaning 'nomos' has? Why should we not take Gal 3:2 as referring to Torah?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

That is the $64,000 question. If Paul was consistent in his use of the term, we may not be having this discussion. Part of the problem is Paul's own theology seemed to evolve. He original thought Christians would just naturally do what was right, with the Law written in their hearts, but then he had cases of all sorts of immorality, usually of a sexual nature.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

‘And how do we get not only the Sabbath, but food laws and many others, into that 'moral' section?’

We don’t that is a myth within Adventism, even though many Adventists wrongly think eating pork is a sin – it isn’t. It is like sanitation laws in the OT – there are some general principles of health ‘for the general equity thereof’ (to quote the Westminster Confession).

As noted in the SDA publication Questions on Doctrine:
"It is true we refrain from eating certain articles, as indicated in the query, but not because the law of Moses has any binding claims upon us. Far from it. We stand fast in the liberty with which God has set us free. It must be remembered that God recognized "clean" and "unclean" animals at the time of the Flood, long before there was a law of Moses. We reason that if God saw fit at that time to counsel His people against certain articles of diet, these things were not best for human consumption; and since we are physically constituted in the same way as are the Jews and all other peoples, we believe such things are not the best for us to use today. ” (emphasis added)

See: http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/qod/index.htm

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

Problem here: 'Law of Moses' as understood by our church meant everything except the 10. Do we really want to assert that 'the law of Moses' has no 'binding claims upon us'? That would free us from a duty to observe a lot of things, not just what food we eat.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

Yes we do. It is frankly ridiciculous that you can almost have an affair but think eating pork publicly is a worse sin. I don't think eating pork is a sin at all! Perhaps a little unhealthy, like eating with unwashed hands, but we are not Jews, and we are not ritually ceremonially unclean if we do so. We are breaking no civil-sundry law of the Torah that we deserve any sort of punishment.

Kevin Riley
Reply
4 days ago

I am assuming the 'you' is generic, seeing I have already said I don't believe we are obliged to 'keep' any law simply because it is a law. I have a friend who lived with his girlfriend for over a year before they were married, but could not bring himself to eat any meat because it was 'sinful'. He has since been divorced and now eats meat and claims to have no interest in religion.

My point was that in saying we need to keep the 10 commandments, but were not bound by 'the law of Moses' which we understood to be everything except the 10, we were excluding a lot of laws that in practice we believe still apply. Our practice was definitely not in line with our profession. I don't want to get sidetracked, because this was about the Sabbath, but I don't believe we can define sin simply as breaking a law, so I would say that eating pork may be a sin, or it may not be. I also believe that, while holiness remains important (perhaps even vital), we cannot believe in Christ's life, death and resurrection and hold that any action or substance can make us 'unclean'. I don't believe it is all about law and punishment.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

So now you are saying we should keep the 10 commandments? I am mighty confused?
Or are you saying we should keep them? I certainly don't think we are bound by any other Mosaic Law other than the 10 commandments, including food laws. Sure, they might have some benefit, but again they were primarily for the governing of Israel. I understand many Adventists might disagree, but as you are perhaps saying, we are being inconsistent then. If Adventists say some parts of the Mosaic ceremonial-civil laws apply, then which ones?

I don't think any of them apply? I only think the 10 Commandment, apply, and only apply as generic principles to be applied by each person or group according to their own cultural context. The same goes for the Sabbath. I believe the seventh-day Sabbath is a universal principle of true worship, but each person and culture keeps it in their own way.

Kevin Riley
Reply
3 days ago

I was saying the church taught to keep the 10 commandments, but the laws of Moses did not bind us. It didn't take long before we started appealing directly to "God said" to enforce not eating unclean food. And considering we always appealed to the OT laws on other matters we considered 'moral' - like who could marry whom, no sex outside marriage, etc, it was an easy step to take. The church started out saying the law of Moses had no authority for Christians, but they applied that in an ad hoc fashion. It was out of sync with our insistence that all of Scripture was inspired and authoritative. The move to see a distinction between 'moral' and 'ceremonial' seemed to solve that problem for the church. As I said before, I don't think it works if examined closely.

I believe if we follow the Spirit's lead we will live a life that is not out of harmony with the 10 commandments. But that is because the Holy Spirit does not lead contrary to God's character. It isn't because we must/should keep any law by focusing on that law.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
3 days ago

When you say 'the church' do you mean the SDA Church or Christendom? The SDA Church didn't invent the theological concept of seeing an implicitly division between the moral aspects of the Torah (which are still relevant to Christians) and ceremonial/civil aspects (which were only for Jews and fulfilled in Christ) - it was something Christendom long did as found in the historic creeds.

To say that through the Spirit's leading someone will live in harmony with the 10 Commandments seems to suggest they reflect God's character - of how God plans us to live with each other and in relationship with Him? That suggests you do implicitly see a difference between the Moral aspects of the Law as found in the Decalogue, compared with the other parts of the Torah.

Again, I am not talking about legalism, I am just trying to understand why the Spirit would lead us to worship 1 God, not have idols, honour His name and keep the seventh-day Sabbath, but not lead us to worship many Gods, sacrifice lambs for our sins, have tassles on our garments or celebrate Yom Kippur. You can't in any way justify the former but not the latter without seeing some implicit distinction between the Decalogue (written in our hearts) and the theocratic rules for Israel.

Simply praying to the Holy Spirit doesn't magically make us do the former and not the latter. We aren't all
prophets. For most of us, we gain knowledge of God through reading the Bible - the OT and NT. Without context, a believer won't understand why they should worship 1 God and keep the seventh-day Sabbath, but not feel obligated to circumcise their sons or have sexual relations with their mother-in-laws.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
4 days ago

‘And if we create a new 'health' section, how do we decide what goes there?’

I agree that is what many Adventist theologians do, adding a 4th health section, based on a type natural law, to the tradition 3 divisions of the orthodox creeds.

‘Traditional Christian distinctions between “moral,” “ceremonial,” “civil,” and “health” categories of law are interpretive classifications not explicitly stated in the Bible. However, Walter Kaiser has pointed out that within the Pentateuch there are some terminological and conceptual indications of such differences between kinds of laws.’
I wish to submit reasons why I believe men and women should be treated equally when it comes to the question of ordination to the gospel ministry. If at any time the system of ordination is changed to anything else I maintain that equality should still be maintained whatever the system is called. As ordination is the current practice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I am arguing for that exact same privilege for women pastors. Here are my reasons.

1. **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are Not Gender-based**

    I believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not gender based. There is no indication that these gifts are promised to men alone. The entire church may be recipients of these gifts.

    I have heard it said that it is quite in order for a woman to be a prophetess but a woman should not be an elder or a pastor of a church. How do we make such a differentiation in the gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

    The gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in 1 Corinthians 12, in Romans 12 and in Ephesians 4. Let us look at some of these gifts listed in Ephesians. In listing the gifts given by the Holy Spirit Paul writes: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11, 12).

    What is there in the above passage which says that God can gift some women to be prophets but He will not gift a woman to be a pastor? There is no such distinction in this passage. Any differentiation made is not by the Holy Spirit but is made by man through custom and tradition.

    The prophet Joel makes it clear that these gifts of the Holy Spirit will be even more pronounced in the latter days. He writes: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on my menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29). The context of the passage confirms that this applies especially when there is salvation through the remnant in the latter days.

    Notice that “your daughters shall prophesy [or preach] and the Spirit will be poured out on menservants and on maidservants”. The Holy Spirit is not making any distinction based on gender. If the Holy Spirit calls a woman or a lady to be a Pastor and gifts her with the ability to preach and teach what right do we have to say, “The Church says you can’t do this”?

2. **The Priesthood of All Believers**

    Ideally, every member of the church who is baptized is called to be a priest and can stand between God and man. We do not need an earthly priest. Christ is the only Mediator and all members can function as priests to bring sinners to God. This is the thought of 1 Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a
holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” This royal priesthood consists of all members of the church, men and women, young people and boys and girls without reference to age.

Some would like to say that the priesthood in Old Testament times from which this passage comes, was confined to men and so this priesthood in 1 Peter 2:9 must also be confined to only men. But that is faulty reasoning. Often Old Testament passages which appear to be localized and particularized are made general and wide in the New Testament. If we want to confine the priesthood of the New Testament to men only on the basis of this text, then also the ‘chosen generation’ and “His own special people” are confined to men.

On the basis of this passage, I believe that any woman can function as a ‘priest’ or pastor if the Holy Spirit gifts her for such a work. What God has chosen we have no right to prohibit.

### 3. Come into Line with God’s Might Moving

The church should always be ready to move into line when God moves in a special way. One period when God moved mightily in the affairs of the world was when multitudes of Gentiles began to join the early church in the days of Paul and the apostles. The question of circumcision was agitated. A group in the church in Jerusalem insisted that all these new believers should be circumcised according to the instruction given to Abraham as a sign of the eternal covenant. (See Genesis 17) Paul began to teach that faith in Christ was supreme and circumcision should not be made a test of fellowship. This position was confirmed at the general church council in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15.

When one reads Genesis 17 in the Old Testament one can understand the position taken by those who maintained that circumcision should remain a requirement. After all it was clear Scriptural instruction. Who gave the church permission to move away from the authority of Scripture? Today, most Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists believe that the mighty moving of the Holy Spirit in the early church revealed a new direction for the church when it comes to circumcision.

I maintain that there is another mighty moving of the Holy Spirit today which to some might seem to be a moving away from some Scriptural instructions given by Paul on the role of women in the church. This movement is opening up the Church to the exercise of all the gifts of the Spirit by both men and women. This has become evident in the great work done by women pastors in China and by more and more women in ministerial work in different divisions of the world church.

If the Holy Spirit is moving in this way what right do we have to insist on no pastoral role for women or two tiers of ministry, one for men and one for women? One in which men may be ordained and receive full recognition and another for women as second class pastors who may not be ordained? I believe that the moving of the Holy Spirit indicates that the church should open its arms fully to welcome women ministers on the same footing as men.

### 4. Both Men and Women Are Called to Servanthood, not to Headship

We hear it said that Paul calls men to a position of ‘headship’ over the woman in the family and that this applies to the church as well. Men can have headship over the wife and over the church family but a woman may not be ‘head’ of a church family.
I would suggest that in the church, men are not called to ‘headship’ but to ‘servanthood.’ This also applies to women. They are also called to ‘servanthood’ in the local church and not to ‘headship.’ I will return to this in a moment.

In the marriage setting we could make a case for the teaching that the man should be the head of the wife. But let me also remind you of the ideal relationship in the family. In the Garden of Eden, before sin, the ideal was partnership between husband and wife. After the entrance of sin it became rulership and then God said the man would rule over the woman, he would have to labor for sustenance, and there would be pain in childbirth. All of this is identified as the results of sin, and this rulership has opened the gates to all types of abuse against women.

As Adventists we often hear that we should get back to Eden in diet and many other ways. I would suggest that in Eden the relationship between husband and wife was partnership and after sin it became rulership. As the gospel takes possession of our hearts and we move back to Eden we will move in the home from rulership to partnership.

Coming back to the church, I believe that rulership on the part of the man is out of place. Men are called by God to servanthood in the church. And this call is for women as well. Thus in an ideal church situation neither men nor women are to exercise ‘headship.’ Each is to demonstrate ‘servanthood.’

Jesus made this clear in speaking to His disciples as they contended about who was the greatest. “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you let him be your slave. (Matt. 20:25-27) Today, God is inviting both men and women to positions of servanthood in the church rather than ‘headship’ and ‘rulership.’

**Conclusion**

I believe that the clear call of the Holy Spirit to the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to treat men and women in pastoral work with equal dignity. We are called to recognize the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in bestowing gifts on all without prejudice towards gender. This calls for the ordination of both men and women on an equal footing as the Lord calls and as the Church recognizes that call in the usual way.

We must not sit on the fence in this issue. Either we recognize the above or we must go all the way in the opposite direction. We will then have to give preeminence to a literal understanding of Paul’s counsel on women without regard to local custom and tradition and follow him all the way. Not only would we have no women local elders or pastors, women would not be permitted to preach in any local church if men were in attendance for a woman must be silent in church. This would also apply to teaching the Word in any Sabbath School class where men were present. No woman should ask questions in church or in Sabbath School.

In Paul’s day there were church assemblies often in homes and there was no distinction between a divine service and Sabbath School. Whatever the nature of the assembly, women were to be silent and only ask questions of their husbands in private. Of course no women should be allowed to be chair of a committee that includes men for this would be ‘headship’ and ‘rulership’ over the men in the group. Also we might as well go all the way and make it clear that the Theological Seminary is not open to any woman wanting to take a theological or Biblical studies course where she would end up being qualified to lead men.
In the view of some the Bible upholds slavery and in America those who supported slavery based many of their arguments on Scripture. It was a slow process for Christians to move away from slavery and this took place only in the 19th and 20th centuries. Should we be surprised that it has taken an equally long time for the church to move away from the subordination of women to the equality depicted in Galatians 3:28? “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

How should the Adventist Church handle this issue as they approach the General Conference Session of 2015? I think we should remember that we can have true unity in diversity. If we insist on unity defined as complete uniformity on this issue we could split the church. We should recognize the honesty of those who believe that the Holy Spirit is leading the church toward equality in service. Likewise, there are those who honestly believe that the counsel of Paul on women should be followed in the Church today.

Here is my suggestion. The General Conference should work towards presenting a policy of equality to the world church. If the whole Church is not ready to move towards women’s ordination, vote a recommendation that each Union around the world be allowed to decide what to do in this regard. Many of our Unions will want to follow the example of China and just get on with the work of the Lord in their area and ordain their women pastors. The General Conference Session of 2015 should then suggest that the Church move in this direction and by 2020 or 2025 the whole world might be ready to follow the pattern of many Unions throughout the world. By thus recognizing diversity we would be able to maintain the unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

_Eric Webster is an ordained minister and veteran leader in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He is a respected Bible scholar and has long served as director of the Voice of Prophecy Bible School in South Africa._

Join in the discussion:
Courtenay
Reply
5 days ago

Thank you Dr Webster for sharing your clearly reasoned and biblically motivated thoughts on why you believe that men and women should be treated equally in terms of ordination.

As a fellow South African I would especially like to thank you for your courage in speaking out on this matter, I wish that more of our African brothers and sisters would follow your example. I feel privileged and honoured to have witnessed your life of faith and dedication to God, and pray that he will continue to bless you as you and your wife witness for Him.

Courtenay Harebottle

All4Him
Reply
5 days ago

Its not about what we feel its about plain teaching of the Word of God. Sunday worship will "seem" like the logical and right things to do....isn't it what Christ wants that we all become one and worship Him on the same
day? The family and its roles are being attacked by the devil just like the Sabbath.

"Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands, and conformed to worldly customs, will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death"  Prophets and kings P 188

Christorculture.com

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Agree. But likewise there is a danger in following Papal Tradition thinking it is the Word of God when the Word of God says no such thing.

But we have been round in circles with these arguments before haven't we All4Him?

Can I suggest what is going to happen in reality. In the Western world, most of those who oppose WO, as they oppose the use of drums in Church, are older people. In the next 10-30 years, those people are going to die - a sad reality of life. You already see the vast majority of people support WO, and with few exceptions those opposed simply won't be alive shortly.

The only way I can see that this inevitable situation will not occur is one or more of the following occurs:

- The democratic make up of Western SDA Churches change through the rapid loss of its 'Western' (i.e. usually white but not always) members, and rapid growth and influx immigration of 'non-Western' members. For example, you see a large influx of South Pacific Polynesians into the SDA Church, who tend to more conservative. They also begin to have a greater say, because some 25% or more of new Ministers are Polynesians, much more than their 10% or less total population (I don't have the exact figures).
- The Developing World, through its effective control over the GC (e.g. appointment of Pres Wilson being a good example) tries to impose a conservative revival within the Western Church. You see that with the GC's endorsement now of GYC, which used to kind of be on the fringe.

I think the first scenario is more likely than the second. Despite protests from people such as Nathan to the contrary, part of me suspects the One Project is a de facto pro-liberal movement launched to try and counter the rising influence of the GYC movement. I hope that is not the case, but deep down I suspect that motive in the mix.

However, I am still not sure if it will be enough for the conservative wing of the Church to turn the Western Church conservative again, and to overturn these Union moves to allow WO. I suspect it is probably forever too late. I am not making a moral judgment over what is right and proper, or what should happen, just speculating about what will happen given the Church's demographics.

William Noel
Reply
5 days ago

Stephen,
Good points and observations. However, my greater concern in this larger issue is whether or not we individually or collectively as a church will allow the Holy Spirit to work. The Holy Spirit is the most frequently-referenced and active revelation of God in the Bible. In Genesis we see the Holy Spirit at work in creation and the last mention of God in Revelation is about the Holy Spirit. Everywhere in between the people who did great things for God had one thing in common: empowerment by the Holy Spirit. Everything Jesus did was through the power of the Holy Spirit. He taught his disciples to seek and use the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who energized and directed the early church. It is wonderful seeing the One Project directing attention to Jesus. But that is one step short of where God wants us to be. I am seeing the Holy Spirit work in my ministry and the ministries of others. It is where the Holy Spirit is embraced that the church becomes powerful and arguments are replaced by celebrations of God's power at work.

Will you seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit so you can be transformed and energized to do God's work beyond anything you have ever imagined possible? Will we as a church pursue the Holy Spirit as Jesus instructed? That is our need.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
5 days ago

Sorry when I was talking about Polynesians, who tend to be more conservative, I was talking about the South Pacific Division, and the demographic make up of Australian and New Zealand SDA Unions. I have also lived in the UK, and similarly the Afro-Carribeans, who also tend to be conservative, now increasingly dominate the SDA Church there, with the number of 'indigenous' (i.e. white) SDAs fast in decline. I have also spent a lot of time in France, and the SDA Church there is also in a similar situation, where the SDA Church is dominated by ethnically African people from the former French colonies of West Africa.

Again, I am not saying any of this is either good or bad - just trying to discuss the reality on the ground.

Kevin Riley
Reply
5 days ago

When it comes to the ordination of women, Polynesians are not necessarily in the camp opposing women pastors, any more than opposing women elders. Having worked with a couple of Polynesian women elders, I can only pray 'may their tribe increase' :) In terms of the SPD, it also pays to remember that Melanesians make up over 50% of members, and they also are not united on this question. There are women working as elders and pastors in Melanesia. The assumption by some Australians and New Zealanders that the Islanders would oppose women as elders turned out not to be the case. The fact that 'Pacific Islanders' are as homogeneous and united as 'westerners' may explain some of that. I am not sure we can treat Polynesians as if they were united, either. The younger generation - at least in NZ - was not necessarily any more conservative than other NZers.

It is likely that Polynesian and South American churches will follow the pattern of the Polish and other churches of former generations - after the first generation, they blend into the wider church. The danger is that the loss of those past the first generation will lead to the church being dominated by first generation immigrants, who do tend to be more conservative - in the case of some African and Asian groups, sometimes even more conservative than our home-grown far right wing.

Stephen Ferguson
Yes probably right. So do you think there is a big difference between people in the Developing World, compared to people from the Developing World who emmigrate to the Western World, and then as you say after 1 or 2 generations they too are just as Western? What do you think the chances of the GC hoping to make the Western Unions more conservative?

Kevin Riley

I have seen this issue argued for decades now. I see a number of positions that have not varied much over time.

1) One extreme is represented by a man who attended my church when I was in late primary/early high school - so the early 70s. If a woman got up to speak in SS or church, he left the room. He believed women could lead and teach women, but not men, or even boys beyond about 10yrs old. Even below that, he believed women should only be teachers in children's SS if no men were available. There are still people who take that view in virtually every part of the world. They tend to have a high commitment to taking the Bible literally. The culture encourages this conclusion, at least on this issue, in some places.

2) Others take what we could consider the 'traditional conservative' view, that women can lead and teach, as long as it is not in a position the church recognises by ordination as granting 'ruling authority' in the church. So not pastor, elder or deacon - and therefore no preaching from the pulpit. That is what the practice was in my church up until the 1980s. If a woman did speak from the front, it was always from the floor in front of the pulpit, not behind it, to signal she did not speak with church authority. When we occasionally had a visiting female speaker from the Conference office, she preached from the floor in front of the pulpit. The first time one such woman stood behind the pulpit to preach led to quite a bit of discussion about the propriety of that. There are many people all over the world who are still very comfortable with that position, and believe it is both biblical and culturally appropriate.

3) what we could call the 'comtemporary conservative' view, which is that women can do the work of pastor, elder or deacon, but can not be ordained to those positions, or they can be ordained as elder or deacon, but not pastor. It depends on whether elder and deacon is seen as conferring authority or not. I find this the least satisfactory position, and the least easy to defend biblically, even though it is approved by the GC, as is position 2)

4) women can hold any office and be ordained to any office. This is not exclusive to the western world, but I would guess probably about 90% of its supporters are found there or were educated there.

I see more evidence of support for postion 1) among members in some developing areas than in the developed world. Africa is a good example, although it is not uniform. If we take a literal approach to Scripture, and privilege commands and teaching over narrative, then this position is easily defended. It also has most of the last 2000 years of Christian history behind it.

I don't see a lot of support for position 4) in developing countries. Most members there would fall into position 1) or 2), with a small but growing number being willing to accept 3). I suspect that when they move to western countries, their children tend to move more towards positions 2) and 3), while the adults are unlikely to move
I know there is support for position 4) among some Polynesian groups in NZ and Australia, especially among the younger generation, but I don't know that even the pastors of their churches could give accurate numbers. I know that some young Africans sometimes struggle with the way women in Australia speak up and will even contradict or disagree with men in public. That varies somewhat depending on the culture of their home. I suspect they will assimilate over time, but it may be 50-60 years before those communities hold the same values as the wider community. In the long run I don't see western Unions becoming more conservative on this issue. Not unless there is severe haemorrhaging of all but the most conservative young people from the churches. That, plus continued migration from conservative areas could tip the scales.

If a vote came at Division level in the South Pacific, I would hesitate to predict how it would go. So much would depend on the position the leaders took publicly (if any), and who spoke for and against. I think the same applies at Union level for PNGUM and CPUM. I would be surprised if it didn't pass in AUM and NZPUM. The problem with SPD is just its sheer diversity. After a year in PNG, I thought I understood it. After 2 years, I suspected I knew nothing. After 3 years, I knew that everything I said about a place may be 100% correct (at that time) and yet anything from 0% to 100% may apply to the next village. In Polynesia it is more likely to be at the level of island group on most things, but there is still a lot of diversity even within small groups. That is what makes the Pacific interesting. The slogan "PNG - Land of the Unexpected" was not just a marketing slogan :)

One question that has not been answered is how the vote would go if, rather than being a proposal to ordain women, the proposal was to restrict women from the role of pastor, or even elder and deacon. There was passionate resistance to the move to ordain deaconesses at the last GC, and the vote to simply ordain deacons without regard to gender surprised and angered many delegates. We assume we have settled the question of women doing the work of deacon, elder and pastor, and all we are arguing over is ordination, but I really think we may be wrong there.

-Shining

Thank you for this detailed analysis. I feel like I have a better understanding of another part of the world. When I was observing at GC in Atlanta 2010 (my first time there, I noticed that there were very few delegates at most of the business sessions. I am guessing wildly that they attended when they thought something important was happening. Many were in among the booth pavilion. I can only speculate where the rest were.

The thing is, who knows what the make-up will be at the time they are voting at any given point. I am going to guess that why some delegates were angry is things were done when they weren't in attendance. The first session I visited there were maybe 200 delegates seated at the time. I haven't heard anyone anywhere talk about this when they discuss the importance of the GC in session.

Kevin Riley

For many delegates from the developing world, it is their first (and for some, only) chance to see how others live. I don't blame them if sometimes they find that there are more interesting things to do than attend meetings on issues that may not really affect them. For every exciting discussion of ordination there are a few on not-quite-so-exciting changes to policies, etc. Perhaps there should be provision made for a few days of sightseeing first. Or, even more radical, perhaps holding the GC somewhere where most of our members won't be
dazzled by the 'bright lights' of a life they will never live. I am sure our leaders would survive a week or so of living in less than 5 star accommodation.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
3 days ago

Why should what one or two unions choose, affect the entire world church? This is both silly and ridiculous. If the NAD decides the women should be ordained, why does Ted demand that all SDA churches everywhere abide by the same rules? Since no one has given a biblical or theologically persuasive reason for views on WO, it should never be considered a decisive issue but only one of cultural acceptance. Just as in some island countries it is considered "proper dress" for the preacher in the pulpit to wear a shirt not tucked in his pants--it would be a faux pas in many parts of the country; or that hats should or should not be worn by women. Fighting 100 years over silliness!

Jean Corbeau
Reply
3 days ago

I can picture a colleague of Korah, writing a column for the Exodus Press, which starts: "I wish to submit reasons why I believe men and women should be treated equally when it comes to the question of ordination to the levitical priesthood. If at any time the system of ordination is changed to anything else I maintain that equality should still be maintained whatever the system is called. As ordination is the current practice in the Hebrew theocracy, I am arguing for that exact same privilege for women priests. . . . 

I see many parallels

-Shining
Reply
2 days ago

I see parallels too. Korah was insisting on holding on to the old way that God had usually used to determine spiritual leaders. Mirium had a leading role in the organization, was considered a prophet. And the mistakes God forgave her did not hold a candle to the ones God forgave her brother Aaron.

Steve Blue
Reply
3 days ago

Dr. Webster's wise advise is directed correctly to the current leadership of the General Conference. It is the current leadership that have facilitated this so called crisis by choosing to make this a world-wide issue rather than one that can be applied Union by Union as many contend the current church structure allows. By disallowing North-America, and European Divisions to treat women pastors as equal to their male counterparts, they have forced the hands of those who see equality as a mater of conscience to act from their convictions. Church policy can never trump conscience nor should one ever be asked to compromise a moral conviction for the sake of following policies that are adaptable to time and place. It is unclear if Dr. Webster's call is for Unions to wait until 2015 to act. Waiting could have been morally tolerated if the Divisions had been allowed to proceed with the now defunct e-60 policy proposed last year. By disallowing North America to allow Women to serve in all positions of church leadership, the General Conference leaders have thrust this issue to the forefront, and should not be surprised that Unions are voting

http://www.atoday.org/article/1331/columns/z-columns-by-guest-writers...
matters of conscience over matters of policy.

Ella M
Reply
2 days ago

Dr. Webster, Thank you for your spiritual, biblical, and reasonable approach to this subject. It's the best I have seen.

The church organization's CEOs should be leading us according to the principles of Jesus and directing the world church gradually to equality in Jesus. Because they have not done so, women continue to be abused and treated inhumanely in many parts of the world. Just ask some of our missionaries who have witnessed this behavior. Jesus set an example for the future when he spoke to the woman at the well and rescued another woman from those who would stone her. Women accompanied men and supported the Gospel in a time when women were not allowed to participate in their cultures.

Now our organization has the opportunity to take a stand for moral justice and equality before the world. Yet there seems more concern to be in control than trusting God to lead the church into the future and prepare all people for His return. We deceive ourselves by using "unity" as a reason for not doing the right thing; that is not God's way. It was used by the Roman church and by the Jews of Jesus' day who feared losing control of the people. Remember it was our Savior who saw through their lack of love. Now I don't think the men at the GC are bad people, and some in their hearts must question their decision; may they not be short-sighted. I am praying for them.

I am also praying for some women who may want ordination for selfish reasons and personal power. Everyone must examine their own motives in order for God to bless. That is why it might have been better to do away with ordination all together that all could be humbled and become true servant leaders and part of the priesthead of all believers. Now that would be a powerful message to the world and especially the secular world that so distrusts organized religion. Right now our example is a poor one in those parts of the world where Christianity is dying out.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
2 days ago

Would this not be entirely different:

"some women who may want ordination for selfish reasons and personal power"

by substituting "men" for women?

"some men who may want ordination for selfish reasons and personal power."

It is both demeaning to women and assumes that only women who want ordination are seeking it for power and men have no selfish reasons for power.

Surely, no one could really mean that. Could it be that is the reason the G.C. hasn't ordained women--they are selfish and seek power unlike the very self-giving men who never seek power?

Women may want power, but men are totally exempt for that desire? This shows a very sexist statement to even hint that women might wish ordination for selfish reasons but that men are exempt from such feelings.
Please, listen to someone saying that and re-read to see that it is very demeaning to women.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

Elaine, this obviously goes both ways and has been practiced by men since the church began. However, I didn't think it would be misunderstood since we were talking only about women here. I hope no one else took it the way you did.

Elaine Nelson
Reply
a day ago

Because it was an assumption. Do you know any women seeking ordination for selfish reasons and power? This is how rumors and false impressions begin.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

Since women are just as subject to sin as men, I can say that there is no doubt some are going to feel this way. Actually in such circumstances I might be tempted to feel that way after spending years, money, and experience to become a pastor and then being denied the term that denotes acceptance and recognition. I have been in similar circumstances in a different field in church work.

I don't appreciate the way you twisted by words.

Bea
Reply
a day ago

It amazes me that any woman is against WO - it's like women choosing to remain slaves - beyond my comprehension. To me it just proves how successfully indoctrinated we are as women in the church - and how indoctrinated men are as well. We should not be stagnated on this issue that could have been passed over a hundred years ago. At what point do we realize the insanity of it all and realize oil and water don't mix. Maybe those beasts and dragons of Revelation are all of us debating and wringing our hands over WO - the straw that broke the camel's (SDA) back.

On the other hand, look at all the beautiful paperweights and ornaments that have been created from the ash blown off St. Helens May 18, 1980 - what an awesome, devastating sight. Who knows what we will look like as we continue to take on this debate.

God's Will Paramount
Reply
a day ago

WO? What's the fuss, really. Let's talk about MO (Men's Ordination) for a minute, shall we. Where in the 66 books of the Bible do we see men being ordained as PASTORS? If anyone can give me that one text, just one, I will be eternally grateful to you. Thanks.
All4Him

Reply
a day ago

So Acts 6:6 is a fluke?

Elaine Nelson

Reply
a day ago

They were prayed as they distributed bread.

All4Him

Reply
a day ago

Read Acts 6:5 there is a list of men for service......

Kevin Riley

Reply
a day ago

Are you suggesting they were ordained as pastors?

God's Will Paramount

Reply
a day ago

Which version are you reading from AllforHim. All Bible versions I know of, in any language, including the original, speak of men of good repute etc, who were appointed to serve tables because the Hellenists were complaining that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. They chose seven and the apostles laid their hands on them as they prayed for them. The result was phenomenal. The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Conclusions: 1. The passage you quoted has absolutely and clearly nothing to do with the ordaining of male pastors. 2. If you want your church to grow phenomenally, ordain men to serve tables, so widows will not get neglected, and have their need for bread met daily. Our problem with decades of "fight" in the church to the very top of GC leadership is that we try to defend two church traditions/policies (ordination of men and commissioning of women) as if they were the commands of God and we add insult to injury by wanting to stretch the traditions/policies further by pushing for WO. Let’s heed the very serious and solemn warning by John the Apostle: " I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book (the Bible): if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book..." (Revelation 21:18).

All4Him

Reply
a day ago


Look at Christ own example He chose 11 apostles that were men and one chose himself and when they replaced Judas a man was choosen.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:7 (KJV) Whereunto I am ORDAINED a preacher and goes on into chapter three where he writes...
God's Will Paramount: Please explain what you think God's Will is on the following EGW quotes......

The primary object of our college was to afford young men an opportunity to study for the ministry and to prepare young persons of both sexes to become workers in the various branches of the cause. 5T page 60. Those who enter the missionary field should be men and women who walk and talk with God. Those who stand as ministers in the sacred desk should be men of blameless reputation. 5T page 598.

These two quotes are not flukes for they fit in with the rest of her writings.....

There is an urgent demand for laborers in the gospel field. Young men are needed for this work; God calls for them. Their education is of primary importance in our colleges, and in no case should it be ignored or regarded as a secondary matter. It is entirely wrong for teachers, by suggesting other occupations, to discourage young men who might be qualified to do acceptable work in the ministry. Those who present hindrances to prevent young men from fitting themselves for this work are counterworking the plans of God, and they will have to give an account of their course. There is among us more than an average of men of ability. If their capabilities were brought into use, we should have twenty ministers where we now have one.

Young men who design to enter the ministry should not spend a number of years solely in obtaining an education. Teachers should be able to comprehend the situation and to adapt their instruction to the wants of this class, and special advantages should be given them for a brief yet comprehensive study of the branches most needed to fit them for their work. But this plan has not been followed. Too little attention has been given to the education of young men for the ministry. We have not many years to work, and teachers should be imbued with the Spirit of God and work in harmony with His revealed will, instead of carrying out their own plans. We are losing much every year because we do not heed the counsel of the Lord on these points. Testimony Treasures Volume 2, Page 416.

This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop HE desireh a good work. A bishop then must be blameless husband of one wife....1 Timothy 3: 1,2

Debonnaire Kovacs
Reply
about 13 hours ago

Some years back, a couple who are close to me but whom I will not identify, to protect their privacy, belonged for a time to a group (not Adventist) who believed that the entire Bible was written only to men except where it specifically said women. So Proverbs 31 and a few other verses were the only parts that pertained to women, and the only major commandment God had given women was to obey their husbands as they would obey Christ. I wasn't in the group, but the couple showed me the syllabus they were studying.

"What about the ten commandments?" I asked.

They pointed out that in the 10th, it specifically says not to covet "thy neighbor's wife." Clearly it was speaking only to men. Everything in the Bible, in fact, where it said man, meant man only. "He who has clean hands and a pure heart" may stand before God. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," etc. (I should make it clear that my friends were not sure they believed all this; they were merely sharing what their study group was learning.)

I read for myself the part of the syllabus that was disturbing them the most. It said that if a man told his wife to do something that she knew was a clear sin, and against the law of God, she could gently, submissively try to point it out to him, but if he held firm, she was to do as he asked, and God would hold her in the clear because she had obeyed his one command to her, to obey her husband, and would hold the husband guilty for the sin of
"Let me understand this!" I gasped. "If my husband wants to bring another woman into my bed (I've known of men who did this) and I can't talk him out of it, I'm to submit to this??!!"

The husband said, "All I can say is, it makes me want to be really careful to obey the will of God, if God is holding me responsible for both!"

I felt that the group was saying a woman was not a free moral agent, almost that she did not even have a soul of her own. We dropped the discussion, and I am happy to say they didn't stay in the group for long.

Elaine Nelson

Reply

about 12 hours ago

Sadly, this still represents many Christian groups that truly believe the man is solely responsible not only for his wife, but their children. The extreme views are regularly seen in the media where men have beaten their wives and children for not obeying him.

Such stories only bring Christianity into disrepute.

God's Will Paramount

Reply

30 minutes ago

All4Him, I read and re-read your response and you still insist on not answering my simple and straightforward question. Apparently while I am talking apples, you choose to speak of oranges. I guess that's where we call it a day and pray the Lord's blessings on each other, in love.

Anonymous

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Preview comment

Posting as James White Periodical Lib - 1 Andrews University Subscribe to comments

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Mark Hall, lead singer for Casting Crowns, paints one of the most poignant pictures of Christ in his recent #7 hit, *Jesus, Friend of Sinners*. However, while portraying Jesus as the sinner's friend, the song exposes Christ's followers as cutting "down people in your name" and admitting "Nobody knows what we're for, only what we're against, when we judge the wounded." The song pleads with Jesus to "Open our eyes to the world at the end of our pointing fingers," and "put down our signs, cross over the lines and love like You did." Amazing lyrics! Cuts deep!

The problem with those of us who are followers of Jesus is that we do not love like He did. In Jesus day, the non-religious flocked around Him. He did not merely tolerate them - He truly loved them so much that they constantly sought Him out - to the point that the religious (Pharisees and teachers of the law) accused Him of being a glutton and drunkard - a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34). In Luke 15 Jesus tells 3 stories about lost people - sinners. But these parables are not so much aimed at "sinners" as they are the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who again are accusing Jesus of "welcoming sinners and eating with them (Luke 15:34)."

First Jesus tells His famous story of "the one lost sheep." The Shepherd, obviously Jesus in the story, leaves the ninety and nine sheep who were good and faithfully stayed within the safety of the fold, and goes out into the night and rescues (saves) the one lost sheep. If we're not careful, we can end the story right there with Jesus going out to save the really bad people. But Jesus continues, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

The implication is obvious; Jesus is not suggesting that the Pharisees and teachers of the law (The ninety and nine) are "righteous" and "do not need to repent." THEY think they are righteous and don't need to repent. No doubt about it - there ARE two groups here, but they are not the sinners and the righteous. Both groups are sinners - one knows they are lost and needs saving (The one lost sheep), the other is blind. They don't know they are just as lost in the fold as the ONE was lost outside the fold. They are blind that they too are sinners.

The good news, of course, that Pharisees do not understand, is that Jesus is the Friend of sinners. They are clueless to the fact that every man is blind from birth - we don't nor ever will begin to know the full extent of our sinfulness, but every man has been saved from the power of sin and its condemnation by God's amazing love and grace toward the human race - God is a Friend of sinners.

Isaiah 29 and 35 declare the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind and they would see the goodness of God and His salvation. In John 9 Jesus opens the eyes of a man born blind and fulfills that Messianic prophecy. Opening our eyes is such an important part to our salvation from sin.

The story begins with the disciples asking Jesus who sinned, this man or his parents. The question exposes the horrendous teaching in those days that a birth defect is God's punishment for some sin you committed in the womb or some sin your parents committed before you were born.

Jesus doesn't hesitate, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

Every one of us is blind from birth and infected with the sinfulness of our father, Adam. We are all born broken and defective. However, like Jesus said, none of that is our fault or our parents fault. (John 9:1-2) Whatever our weakness, or addiction, or sin, we are that way "so that the works of God might be displayed in [us]." (John 9:3) God didn't cause it, but everything that happens to us, He will use to bless us and demonstrate His love for our fallen race.

There are certain weaknesses and sins that I was born with that have been extremely hurtful to me and
many people around me, but Jesus wants me to know that I am not a sinner because of the terrible sins I commit, I am a sinner and disqualified from any right to life because I was born with this fallen nature that can do nothing else but sin. That is not my fault and God is not punishing me because of my sins. On the contrary, Jesus has redeemed me, paid for my sin and if I will allow it, He will use my weakness, my defects, my mistakes, and my blindness (If you please) "so that the works of God might be displayed in me - even broken as I am. And I have seen it over and over again. I meet people who struggle with the same sins I do, stumble because of the same weaknesses that I have, and God uses me to give them hope and remind them of God's love, acceptance, and limitless power. I tell them that "He who began a good work in them will be faithful to complete it."

Next, in the story, Jesus says something that seems strange, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Jesus knew that this miracle was going to catapult Him into the disfavor of the Pharisees and take Him to the cross. To the Pharisees, this sealed their case that Jesus could not be the Messiah. They were blind to a Messiah that would be a Friend to sinners. [Remember when Mary washed Jesus feet? Simon the Pharisee and host to this most important banquet, thought to Himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know what manner of sinner this woman was. He was blind to who God was.] Yet in spite of the fact that Jesus knew what healing this man would cause, He heals him anyway. This is why Jesus had come - to open the eyes of people, dispel darkness and reveal the light of who God really was.

Who are the sinners today? The really bad people - the Mary's and Blind men from birth. Probably the homeless, homosexuals sick with aids, prostitutes, Muslims, some other race, denomination, political party, or radical religion, people who have list of sins we don't approve of, the woman who divorced you, or the man who molested your little girl. Jesus was friends with these kinds of people. They were the ones who loved to hang out with Jesus. See why some people disapproved and even hated Jesus? The reason we feel justified hating some people and getting angry with people who do, is that we truly don't believe we're sinners - or at least not as bad as "they" are. The reason we have a problem forgiving some folks is that we don't see ourselves needing the same amount of forgiveness they do. But remember these were the "sinners and tax collectors" - that means the worst of the worst. Jesus is the friend of the really bad sinners. Romans 5:6-8 reminds us that Jesus dies for the ungodly "at just the right time, while we were powerless, and while we were sinners." And John declares, "Herein is love, not that we love Him, but that He first loved us." But we are blind to our sinfulness. We simply don't believe that we are no better than the worst of sinners.

In fact, we know the cost of such an idea. I mean, Jesus was crucified because He advocated and set up a Kingdom that accepted people like Mary, Matthew, and Zacchaeus. He lowered the standard. He was soft on sin. I mean, look who flocks after Him - the rabble, the people no decent, Godly man would be caught dead with. Of course, 1000's follow Him - they can do whatever they want and still think they're going to be saved, but they'll be surprised when God sets up His kingdom!

Real Godly love is extremely radical and dangerous. It divides us and people can get very angry when they are challenged by God to love unconditionally. So we close our eyes to the light - we prefer the darkness and blindness sets in. The man born blind in our story actually gets excommunicated - thrown out of the temple. Do you realize what that meant to most Jews - no priest, no sacrifice, no forgiveness, no salvation. That's why Jesus comes to Him and reveals to Him that He is indeed the Messiah (John 9:35-38), He IS salvation. It doesn't rest in the authority of men, in buildings, or in participating in the services of the "right church." Salvation comes via a person - Jesus Christ the Son of God. And the scriptures say that this man Worshiped Jesus - The real temple, the real God.

In John 9:39-41 Jesus says, [a] "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."
We are all blind from birth. Some of us think we see everybody's sins perfectly, but we can't see our own, because we won't acknowledge our blindness, because we think we see everything about everybody, OUR guilt remains. In other words, we continue to suffer for sins that Jesus could heal us of, but we refuse to acknowledge them so we stay blind. But to those of us who know we are indeed blind from birth, Jesus comes and judges us - He opens our eyes and shows us our sinfulness but also He opens our eyes so we see His love for us as sinners. So if Jesus is the Friend of sinners, let's pray that God will open our eyes Lord so we can know the depth of our sin.

Remember when Mary poured the Spikenard on Jesus feet out of love and devotion. Jesus asked Simon, who would love the Master more, the one who owed Him little or the one who owed Him much. And Simon replied. "I suppose the one who owed Him much."

Do you see why Jesus opening your eyes to see your sinfulness is so important and powerful? Because the more He shows you of your sin, the more you know you are forgiven, and the more you know how much you are loved. Here is the power of recognizing your blindness and pleading with Jesus to remove it.

Timo Onjukka
Reply
3 days ago

Excellent article, Don. Thank you again!
I've often posited perhaps sinfulness is much less the apple, and far more the fig leaves. But those with better fig leaves than mine vehemently disagree...

Rudy Good
Reply
3 days ago

You have articulated some vital truth well. I have frequently shared with my church family (and a few others, too), that our greatest witness is when we sincerely confess that we are sinners saved by God's grace. Oh, what a Savior!!!

Rudy Good
Reply
about 15 hours ago

What interesting priorities the audience of AToday have.

Kevin Riley
Reply
about 11 hours ago

Perhaps the lack of comment indicates a silent 'amen'. I would like to think that is it.

Stephen Foster
Reply
about 12 hours ago

This is an excellent and vital column!

If it is true (and it certainly is) that “every one of us is blind from birth and infected with the sinfulness of our
father, Adam [and] are all born broken and defective,” what exactly does it mean to be “saved from the power of sin and its condemnation”?

I think that I am clear on what being saved from its condemnation means. What about being saved from its power?

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
about 9 hours ago

Also agree with the general comments. I was wondering, do we make our churches hospitals of healing or court rooms for judgment? Do we realise that we Christians are at best nurses to the Great Physician, not doctors ourselves?

Do we give the impression that one needs a certain level of 'goodness' before they can fellowship with us? Would a person off the street feel comfortable at your church?

Rudy Good
Reply
about 3 hours ago

This blog has reminded me how easily my sinfulness infects everything I do, even what I think of as the good that I do. Certainly God intended for church to be Christ's body in action after His earthly ministry ended, but trying to live in unitiy of that purpose challenges and confronts our sinful nature in frightening ways.

We compete. We rationalize. We emote. We posture. We argue. We cower. We vent our selfishness in a hundred ways in the church. We find it very difficult to confess our sinfulness and repent in the church, but surely this is one of the things we are supposed to do in the church. It is one of its blessings if we find the courage.

Anonymous

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Preview comment

Close
Part 4, The Whistleblower and the Healthcare Corporation

Adventist Health System

Case No.: 2009-CA-019445-0

Ninth Judicial Circuit In And
In The Circuit Court Of The

Marketing & Communications
Kevin Edgerton

not to discuss pending litigation in the press, this statement has been submitted to provide
Adventist Today did not speak with anyone at Adventist Health System before publishing
former employee's delay and obstruction of the court process, the judge also held her in contempt
employee's self-described whistleblower, retaliation and other claims against AHS. Based on the
documents and ordered approximately 1,000 pages of confidential documents be returned to
employee's claims against AHS. In the pending lawsuit, the court inspected certain removed
To date, none of the investigative agencies–federal or state–has found merit in any of the former
employee refused to return them.
recover those confidential documents, and that AHS was forced to file suit after the former
employee accessed, downloaded and removed without authorization confidential
employees. After unsuccessful attempts to retrieve the confidential documents directly from the
patient records and confidential litigation documents from the work files of other AHS
The former employee accessed, downloaded and removed without authorization confidential
agencies and the court. Regardless of how the former employee describes herself or her motives,

In response to AHS' action, the former employee began describing herself as a whistleblower and
In response to AHS' action, the former employee began describing herself as a whistleblower and

To date, none of the investigative agencies–federal or state–has found merit in any of the former

admonished for her failure to show cause for her failure to appear at the May 16, 2012 hearing. To

According to AHS, the former employee has been under an order of the court to return the

The former employee refused to return them.

recover those confidential documents, and that AHS was forced to file suit after the former

In response to AHS' action, the former employee began describing herself as a whistleblower and


JOIN IN THE DISCUSSION:

Anonymous: 5000

kelley Rogers

"Google" Orlando Sentinel AHS fraud charges.

Elaine Nelson

a day ago

Reply

a day ago

Reply

Reply

Honorable Patricia A. Doherty

[signature]

ORDERS

as follows:

(iii) Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's conduct has prejudiced the Plaintiff/Counter Defendant and caused undue expense and delay in Plaintiff/Counter Defendant pursuing its claims.

(i) Defendant/Counter Plaintiff has displayed a pattern of personal defiance to and disobedience of Court Orders. The defendant/counter plaintiff, after numerous previous court orders, has repeatedly failed to appear in person for her deposition.

(ii) Defendant/Counter Plaintiff was given the opportunity to appear at her deposition by leave of the court or to be represented by counsel.

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff failed to appear or file any argument in support of her motion.

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Motion to Dismiss AHS' Motion for Civil Contempt and Sanctions; and

4. AHS' Motion to Strike Moleski's Improper Demands for Jury Trial;

1. Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Motion to Dismiss AHS' Motion for Civil Contempt Against Adventist Health System, Listjudges, Orange County North Circuit and AHS Acting Counsel, Civil Contempt Against Adventist Health System, Listed Judges, Orange County North Circuit and AHS Acting Counsel;

2. Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Motion for Civil Contempt of AHS Against AHS Acting Counsel, Civil Contempt of AHS Against AHS Acting Counsel;

3. Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Motion to Strike AHS' Improper Demand for Jury Trial of AHS Acting Counsel;

4. AHS' Motion to Strike Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Improper Demand for Jury Trial of AHS Acting Counsel;

5. AHS' Motion to Strike Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Improper Demand for Jury Trial of AHS Acting Counsel;

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff's Motion does not involve the current judge assigned to this case, the Honorable Patricia A. Doherty.

Based on the court's review of her motion and AHS' opposition, the grounds raised therein and the record as a whole. Defendant/Counter Plaintiff was previously notified that this Court would rule based on the written

The former employee refused to return them.

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff was given the opportunity to appear at her deposition by leave of the court or to be represented by counsel

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff failed to appear or file any argument in support of her motion.

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff has not provided the Court with any basis for or evidence of financial hardship other than an unsupported, conclusory statement of financial hardship. Because no satisfactory substitute was submitted to the Court, the Court was unable to make such a finding.

Defendant/Counter Plaintiff has not shown the Court any basis for or evidence of financial hardship other than an unsupported, conclusory statement of financial hardship. Because no satisfactory substitute was submitted to the Court, the Court was unable to make such a finding.

Based on the evidence before the Court, the former employee has failed to show any basis for or evidence of financial hardship other than a conclusory statement of financial hardship.
I am certain AHS is more concerned about the article Elaine Nelson mentioned - in the Orlando Sentinel with two attorneys maxed out. When one hears of this type of activity, it’s not too far to stretch brain synapses to accept to your statement about me “you undermine the credibility of the WO movement”, you are free and welcome to give your own opinion.

These are “the court inspected documents” referred to. Now we come to the phrase, the questions his letter generated. He never returned my call.

As for my failure to “speak to anyone at AHS before publishing the one-sided description of events”, I plead guilty, if it means I have no excuse for not doing this. In Part 4 of this series, I would post only material provided by the corporation without comment. After my News & Editor received this letter, along with a pdf file containing AHS’s contretemps letter, I again contacted Mr. Edgerton’s office by phone: twice it was not available. I then sent a message that I would like him to contact me regarding some of the questions he has been generating. He never returned my call.

Well, I certainly agree with the first sentence of your last paragraph. There may actually be something rotten in Denmark. This latest suit has much higher potential of being another fraud story than the Medicare fraud claim against several physicians and providers in south Florida was more than a billion, I believe.

But I think And has been getting the cart before the horse for some time. In my practice and experience, the first priority is building a case and corroborating allegations to obtain reliable, admissible evidence. This did not occur in the instant case. There’s nothing wrong with being patient. What I believe warrants an apology is inadequately investigating allegations, and disregarding warning that further corroboration of evidence should be obtained, before going to press with the story.

As for my statement about “you undermine the credibility of the WO movement”, you are free and welcome to give your own opinions.

As for my statement about “you undermine the credibility of the WO movement”, you are free and welcome to give your own opinions.

As for the the story began with the allegation that Moleski was told by her superiors to delete patient records - or at least information from those records? NOW YOU TELL US THAT MOLESKI NEVER HAD ACCESS TO THE RECORDS FROM WHICH SHE WAS ASKED TO DELETE DATA! Which is it? That is what is at stake here. As a potential whistleblower she had access to sensitive patient records (medical, sexual info, etc.), and they never said she had direct access to the hospital records authority. I could plausibly have been told to remove sensitive records upon my own initiated resignation!

And while you’re at it, you might also explain the following: Does Moleski deny that she downloaded documents and took them from the hospital? Didn’t she say in her email to Patricia, “I am going to take a selection of what I feel is pertinent to the case.”

So many questions arise, but I believe the court has resoundingly dismissed Moleski’s charges, stating that she has “displayed a pattern of personal defiance to judicial authority in her failed attempt to single-handedly displace the judicial process”. I do not believe there is any reason to think that I have an urgent need to read it or that it contains confidential patient information and litigation documents of the hospital. Sounds like there might be more to the story here, Andy.

Edgerton says that a court exposed the “documents inspected and ordered returned.” Have you attempted to locate the court record? You should be able to find out pretty easily who filed it, although Moleski has her name, as well as the name of the physician who signed it, and I’d like to see if she knows who filed it; that’s the best way to know if Moleski actually had access to these documents!

The court has reasonably dismissed Moleski’s charges, stating that she “deemed selected portions of personal medical and or administrative data irrelevant and useless. Do you agree with those allegations by the judge as unwarrented? Why do you go down the rabbit hole in championing Moleski’s unsubstantiated charges, while casting aspersions on the statements of Mr. Edgerton, as unwarranted, when you should easily be able to come up with evidence substantiating or refuting those allegations? Isn’t that the job of a good reporter?}

RECORDS FROM WHICH SHE WAS ASKED TO DELETE DATA!

“a non-confidential event record that you would in good conscience be obligated to issue an apology for the role you have played in smearing AHS with unfounded charges.”

I wonder, Andy...The most recent events reported by Mr. Edgerton, do not preclude the possibility that something untoward is occurring. It’s the same kind of pattern that we see in these other cases, and if we don’t prudently take note of it, then...
A pastor I know once gave me an entirely new look at this familiar story. It's the one of Elijah's depression after the great victory at Mt. Carmel. To recap: Elijah spends a day listening to the frenzied "praying" of Baal's priests, has an ancient altar rebuilt, finds 12 barrels of water (from where?? 3 year drought, remember?) and dumps them on the altar and sacrifice, prays quietly, watches fire from heaven destroy the sacrifice, the water, and the stones, kills (and/or supervises the killing of) 400 priests, prays for rain and gets it, runs 17 miles in front of a horse and chariot, receives a death threat . . . then runs into Judah and collapses. "Please, God, just let me die."

Do you know that feeling? I do.

Here's what I learned from my pastor friend:

The office of prophet is to be the voice of God to the people, and to be the voice of the people to God. Remember Abraham dickering over Sodom? Moses saying, "If you're going to kill them, kill me, but don't do it--you're a better God than that"?

Elijah has just hit a wall. He's burned out. He's not just tired, he's exhausted, out of gas. He has forgotten the rest of God's children and thinks he's the only one who is still faithful. It's one of the hazards of depression. The vision narrows down to just yourself. "Life is no longer worth living, God. Just let me go now."

God understands that, my pastor friend said. He doesn't judge or scold. In fact, he sends an angel to feed Elijah (which is even better than ravens and widows) and gives him the strength to go another 40 days and run some more miles. Then he talks to Elijah in person.

Shhh. Rest. I'm here.

But God also recognizes, as Elijah probably does not--almost certainly does not--that Elijah is done. He is used up. God relieves Elijah of duty.

"If you can no longer speak for the people to me, then you can no longer speak for me to the people. Go anoint two kings. Then find Elisha. Then retire."

I was startled. Seriously? It happened right after this? I picked up my Bible and looked. Sure enough, right in the next few verses. Of course, God lets Elijah spend some time training his replacement. Then he takes Elijah directly to heaven! I'm pretty sure he didn't--doesn't--mind his retirement at all! In fact, I even think I know what he talked to Jesus about, on the Mount of Transfiguration.

But that's just me. It just makes me want to pay attention. Am I, in my God-given roles, whatever they may be, careful to pay attention, to speak to people in God's behalf, and to speak to God in people's behalf? Because
when we can't do that anymore, we should just retire.

Join in the discussion:
Ella M
Reply
about 12 hours ago

Thank you for your contributions in the devotional area. I am now retired from full-time work in the church organization, and sometimes I wonder what God has for me to do for Him. I teach a SS a couple times a month, but it seems something is lacking. I used to write and had a lot published, but now have little motivation.

While reading all of the discussions, I don't see many really applying spiritual principles to the issues. Don't they all have spiritual components that are being ignored? Sometimes I try to bring them up, but it seems like it goes over their heads.

William Noel
Reply
about 2 hours ago

Ella,

Don't waste your time doing what does not bring results.

You're feeling unfulfilled. How are you measuring fulfillment? If you're not seeing results doing what you're doing then it is time to quit that and do something else. The question is: What? Your only source of answers is the Holy Spirit. Study the role of the Holy Spirit in scripture. Give particular focus to studying the role of spiritual gifts in the early church. That is our model for how we should be working today. Seek God's guidance to discover the ministry He has for you.

Now, here's the challenge. Your definition of "ministry" is going to have to change. Maybe radically. You need to be willing to do whatever it is God wants to lead you into. You can't let traditional concepts hold you back or restrict your thinking. I'll give you at least a 90% probability that it has absolutely nothing to do with preaching, teaching or giving Bible studies. Yet it will be more effective than anything you have ever done before because it will be you working in God's power doing what He wants done.

William Noel
Reply
about 2 hours ago

I draw a distinction between burned-out and worn-out. Elijah was worn out so it was time for him to step aside.

We are far more likely to encounter being burned-out when our concepts of how things should be done and our best efforts have reached a point of emotional (and sometimes physical) exhaustion and extreme frustration. I've been there. I've "hit the wall" spiritually and realized the wall was neither injured or moving. That is a time of extreme spiritual risk because our feelings can lead us to give up our familiar relationship with God. Or, we can let God seize the opportunity to give us a new relationship. In my case I was totally frustrated by all the defense of tradition and the power games I saw happening in the church that were preventing it from fulfilling God's commands and growing. So I was at the point of quitting on God completely. That's when He got my attention by making me aware that I was in the position of greatest potential for discovering gift-based ministry in the Holy Spirit. The results have been life changing and I am enjoying a ministry that has both become my passion...
and is helping the church grow.

Anonymous
Collegedale—The Quintessential Adventist Small Town is Now One of the Fastest Growing Suburbs in the State

Submitted: Aug 5, 2012

By Kate Harrison

Ted Rogers remembers riding his bike down rural Apison Pike through Collegedale as a boy, heading to the Trading Post to buy candy. The town center known as Four Corners was just a couple of businesses and didn’t have a stoplight.

Rogers is now Collegedale’s city manager and drives down the same street to get to work, but it’s clustered with restaurants, banks, gas stations and shops. And that’s just the beginning. “We are in the middle of some pretty incredible growth in Collegedale, and we’re only on the cusp,” he said.

Collegedale is still — relatively speaking — a small town: Just 8 square miles and 8,200 residents, according to the most recent U.S. census. But with its population spiking 27 percent since 2000, Collegedale is the fastest-growing city in Hamilton County and one of the quickest-growing in the state.

But its rapid growth over the past decade doesn’t even take into account the activity in the city since the Volkswagen plant and Amazon facilities at nearby Enterprise South industrial park became fully operational. "I consider these census figures already out of date for Collegedale," said Kelly Martin, who in an act of foresight was hired as the town's strategic planner last year.

In rolling fields along Little Debbie Parkway, the most recent sign of growth is beginning to take shape: a $19 million, 278-unit luxury apartment complex called Integrity Hills that is expected to be complete in early 2013. Work on another 246-unit complex on Apison Pike will begin in the upcoming weeks, Rogers said.

And those come after the $100 million development of retirement community Greenbriar Cove. “While the majority of us would like to keep our quaint, small-town feel, we fully recognize and accept that growth is coming,” Mayor John Turner said. “But we’re trying to keep our small-town mindset.”

Magnetism

Many factors have aligned to make Collegedale the magnet it is becoming, explains Rogers. The town has had steady employers in the Collegedale-based Southern Adventist University — owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church — and McKee Foods, producers of Little Debbie Snacks. Both fared well in the recession.

But with the arrival of Volkswagen, the city literally found itself at a crossroads — adjacent to Enterprise South and the growing number of employers in the vicinity, making it a nearby and attractive place for those employees to live. The city is known for some of the best schools in the Chattanooga area and has one of the lowest property tax rates in the county. It also has its own municipal airport.

There is a lot of property — and potential — for more businesses to serve the growing population. “Collegedale is on retailers’ radar screens because we have a relatively affluent population that is largely underserved in certain retail markets,” said Martin.
Pilar Albernas, who in 2011 opened Ají Peruvian Restaurant on Ooltewah-Ringgold Road with her family, said she’s pleased with how the restaurant’s opening has been timed with such development. “With all the construction here, it’s growing every day,” Albernas said.

Besides growing in population, Collegedale also has grown in physical size. The city has annexed outlying property within the urban growth boundary designated by Hamilton County and is continuing to move forward in that process. The growth has led to a new crop of headaches, including concerns about public safety — growing the town’s police force was a hot topic in this year’s budget hearings — and outgrown infrastructure.

**Strategic Growth**

More roads — and bigger roads — are leading to Collegedale. A new exit off Interstate 75 linked Collegedale straight to the highway, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation is about to start widening Apison Pike to a five-lane road and rerouting a new connection with East Brainerd Road. With these expansions, Rogers and Martin say more roadside businesses and retailers are inevitable.

“I see that really breaking loose in the next 18 months,” said Martin. But “breaking loose,” doesn’t mean uncontrolled growth, city leaders emphasize. Over the last several years, commissioners have passed development ordinances bent on promoting an ideal Rogers calls “attractive constraint.” The goal is to keep businesses and apartment complexes from being “monolithic,” “barenaked-brick” and “an incoherent mish-mash” of buildings — just several of the terms city leaders used to describe what they want to avoid.

Buildings are to be constructed with a variety of quality materials and architectural offsets that are naturally pleasing to the eye. Landscaping ordinances call for greenery to soften corners, hide heating and air conditioning units and provide a buffer between properties. Parking lots need curbs. Ideally, all signs will be monument-styled with brick, cement and stone.

“It gives us the opportunity to have planned growth. Not restricted growth, but with zoning and sign ordinances and design standards. We’re raising the bar, asking them to make an investment,” said Turner.

These ordinances have provided a gateway for the luxury apartment complexes and more upscale businesses, Rogers says. “It essentially provides owners with shared property value protection,” Rogers explains. “People are willing to make a business look nicer if they know the one next to them will put in the same effort.”

**Adventist Influence**

More influential than strategic zoning and sign ordinances, Collegedale’s character has been largely defined by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “Collegedale started as an Adventist community. I think it’s fair to say it’s been rather influential in terms of the attractiveness of the area,” said City Commissioner Larry Hanson, an Adventist who retired from a long professorship at Southern Adventist University.

The town draws its name from the school, which moved there in 1916. The fibers of Adventist values have been woven into the community in many other such prominent and more subtle ways. Hanson said an Adventist mentality of stewardship and “looking after each other” has led to a community of good neighbors, with the creation of the nonprofit Samaritan Center and other church-related ministries.

O.D. and Ruth McKee — who began McKee Foods — met when the university was still Southern Junior
College. A long list of commissioners have identified themselves as Adventists. And the university has made a big impact on the city’s arts scene. It is home to the area’s only classical music station, WSMC-FM, and has spurred the creation of the Eastern Tennessee Symphony Orchestra.

Local businesses have learned to cater to the beliefs of its large population of Adventists, who do not work on Saturdays. Many abstain from alcohol and from meat.

“We’re spoiled by the restaurants here,” laughs Lucas Patterson, editorial manager for the university, who said that many restaurants like Rafael’s Pizzeria offer specialty toppings and foods for their Adventist customers.

“We went to a sub shop in Chattanooga the other day and my sons asked what kind of ‘fake meat’ they had,” Patterson said. “I just say, ‘You’ll have to forgive my children; they’re from Collegedale.’ That’s the reference point.”

But as more people unaffiliated with the Adventist faith move into the city, some of that direct influence is being diluted. Hanson estimates that less than 50 percent of the Collegedale population is now Adventist. More businesses are open on Saturdays, and the city has recently become much more alcohol-friendly. Voters approved a controversial liquor-by-the drink referendum allowing restaurants to serve alcohol, and just last month overturned a ban that erased any distance specifications between churches and businesses that sell alcohol.

Vinita Sauder, the vice president of Southern who has lived in Collegedale for 25 years, said that while changes in the alcohol rules have upset some residents, it hasn’t led to conflict. “It’s part of adaptation. As the city matures and businesses move in, we can adjust,” she said. “Obviously we’d prefer to be a dry city, but we’re not the only tenant in town.” As the city grows, mutual collaboration is “stronger than ever,” Sauder said. “We’re growing together. We have healthy businesses, healthy university, and a healthy city.”

Kate Harrison is a staff writer for the Times-Free Press. This article is republished by Adventist Today with permission of the Times-Free Press. More information at http://timesfreepress.com.
Interesting perspective of SAU and the town. I have a question I have wondered about but been afraid to ask.

I know that McKee supports the university with jobs and money and has in the past (as the story goes) had an influence on who could be on the teaching staff. Isn't this just a bit of an ethical problem (or am I being too out of line)? In our increasingly obese nation, they provide sugary, unhealthy treats in this ultraconservative environment. How is that different from a college growing grapes for wine. We could go so far as to even say tobacco. I know it is a matter of degrees, but have been hearing how addictive sugar is and even EGW wrote against sweet rich foods. Now it is being said it goes beyond diabetes to heart disease and cancer.

Any insights on this?

Elaine Nelson

McKee is the southern producer of Adventist health foods. For years, McKee has made many decisions in the Southern Union. Money is power; he has influenced many of the officers and professors at SAU. The 80's "investigation" at SAU where the president and some faculty were either asked to leave, or chose to do so, was mainly supported by him. One of the finest university presidents in SDA education left because he refused to bow to the requests to fire faculty members without reason.

Anonymous
PASTOR USES UNUSUAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS TO RECONNECT HEARTS TO THE CREATOR

Submitted: Aug 9, 2012
By Debbonaire Kovacs

What do wings, reverie harps, wandering bears, and Native American flutes have in common? Would you believe, therapy, healing, and new life?

Let’s start with some definitions. “Wings,” also called “freenote wings,” are a xylophone-like instrument one strikes with mallets. “Reverie harps” are oval stringed instruments meant to be strummed with the fingers. Both of these instruments are already in tune with themselves so that a player, even if she or he has never played anything before, cannot strike a wrong note or make any sound that isn’t purely beautiful. Native American flutes are wooden vertical wind instruments with six holes, typically tuned to a minor pentatonic scale, so while one can learn to play familiar songs on them, it is also possible to simply play from the heart, as Natives historically have done. (In fact, natives of all societies originally saw music as simply beautiful sounds, made with voice, hands, feet, drums, strings, wind, or other instruments. It was only later in time that scales, modes, and “right ways” of doing music were invented in various societies.)

But what about the wandering bears? Well, that’s a name. “Wandering Bear,” the Native name of Adventist pastor Mark Barger, believes that the Creator placed a song in every human heart, and that the song, while often buried or corrupted, is always there and is intended to praise God. He uses all these instruments and more in a broad-ranging ministry that seeks to reconnect all people with the Creator who loves them.

Barger would never have expected to end up in a music ministry. He always believed he was a non-musical person. As a child, he tried a couple of instruments and was told to find something else to enjoy. In his youth he was placed at the back of the choir and told to just pretend to sing whenever they sang in public. But when he grew up, his wife went to a Native gathering known as a powwow and while there, bought him a Native flute for a Christmas present. He put it to his lips, blew a note, and fell in love. Today, he keeps repeating that it was “a miracle. An instrument meant just for me. A gift of God.”

He plays at home, at church, in national parks, in shopping malls. He runs a “flute circle,” and has CDs out, with music by all of the above instruments plus crystal and Tibetan singing bowls, a gong, and more traditional instruments as well. He is a pastor and runs a ministry called “Advent Gospel Ministries” (www.adventgospelministries.com) as well as his music ministry, which is found at www.wanderingbearmusic.com. He takes his healing music to nursing homes and schools.

He also raises eyebrows. On his homepage there is a traditional Native American symbol called a Medicine Wheel. But this one was designed by Barger to preach the gospel with a picture that would reach out to the Native community. His web page says unusual things like:

“Advent Gospel Ministries is a non-denominational Christian outreach for all Christians of all faiths. . . . Although we have a church charter we have neither members nor a desire to create a separate church entity with a membership. . . . The body of Christ can [be] and is found in all denominations and we encourage all Christians to attend the church family/organization of their choosing. If you do not have a church family of your own we invite you to attend the Seventh-day Adventist church nearest you.” And there follows a link to find an Adventist church if desired.

Born in Loma Linda, CA, Mark Barger was raised in a loving and open Adventist family. He says he thinks the roots of his openness began to grow there. While he was attending Union College, his boundaries were stretched a little more. He remembers being a student pastor involved in a traditional revival—that is to say, one geared toward intellectual...
doctrinal truths. Young as he was, Barger felt that this evangelism attempt was approached from the wrong direction.

“That was a real eye-opener to me. I realized that you bring more people to God through the gospel than through doctrines. You have to touch their hearts. You have to touch them and show them love and show them God’s love and what God has done for them.”

He took a theology class at UC from Dr. Floyd Bresee and remembers him saying, “You need to get out and go attend other churches, including the Catholic church. If you don’t understand other people and how they worship, you can’t connect with them.”

Barger remembers another event that he called life-changing. He was with the pastor, driving down the road, and they picked up a hitchhiker. (“It was a different world then,” he added with a laugh. “You picked up a lot more hitchhikers.”) The man, says Barger, was not just someone hitchhiking a ride to get somewhere, but was “a real drifter. But he started talking about the Bible, and he knew more about it than anybody I ever knew.” The hitchhiker talked on and on about the love of God, asking why people didn’t know this, or didn’t talk about it. “And why do people worship on Sunday when the Bible says the seventh day is the Sabbath?” Both Barger and his pastor were amazed. Eventually, the man asked to be dropped off at a crossroads. They dropped him off, but looked back for a final glimpse, and he was gone. They hadn’t noticed any cars. “I think God put him there to give us a message about love of God and studying the Bible to get to know God rather than studying to prove preconceived ideas.”

Barger was a member of the State Patrol for many years, eventually a sergeant, and says it was interesting combining that job with being a Christian and an Adventist. Sometimes he went to church from some crisis, in full uniform. But he felt that God put him in places to help, minister to, and sometimes overtly witness to a vast variety of people, often in very vulnerable situations.

He explained that his name, Wandering Bear, came from his love of travel, his deep sense of protectiveness for people in all walks of life . . . and of course, there’s the pop culture slang of “bears” for state troopers.

As his eventful life continued, God repeatedly brought him into contact, both in the States and overseas, with “a lot of different people from different cultures and different religions.” He says his brother-in-law, John Martin, who pastored at Holbrook Indian School, also had a strong influence on him, helping him to develop his thinking, be more accepting of others, and look for creative ways to minister.

So today we find Mark Wandering Bear Barger playing music in a number of non-traditional ways, member of an intertribal council, leader of a flute circle, volunteer at Murrow Indian Children’s Home, doing fundraisers, giving away Happiness Digest every chance he gets, selling CDs, and now and then being unexpectedly invited to speak by such diverse groups as a Church of God, a national park, and a Mormon-run event called “First Congregation for Native Americans.” He has been nominated for a prestigious Native American music award, and recently, with another award nominee, began a new group they are calling Sacred Journey. (The website, sacredjourneymusic, will be up soon.) He also met some Jewish people who were impressed with his philosophy, explaining that Jews, too, believe that God implants a melody of praise in the heart of each baby born. They are creating a special harp for him, with amazing details too numerous to describe here. You can see details at http://www.wanderingbearmusic.com/blog/.

Perhaps one story sums up his effect on people. Barger had been invited to speak and perform on a cultural day at a college in Arkansas. There were representatives from African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and other cultures. Just as Barger got up to speak, there was a serious tornado warning. About 100 people were rushed away and “stuffed into” a back room. About 30 were Muslim. It was a fairly anxious moment. Barger started to play his flute. He played religious, secular, and “just from the heart” music. The Muslims, in particular, started dancing, clapping, hugging — “They were seeing the love of Christ,” was Barger’s explanation. “I did that for an hour while we waited in that little room. Fear disappeared. We were happy. The tornado came within a block of us, but we never even thought of it.” Barger says some people looked at him as if they were surprised he would hug Muslims. But to him, they were just children of God.

“You can’t just live separate. Christ was so often criticized for that very thing. People are truly thirsting and starving for the love of God and the message we have to share with them. Even people who are anti-God or anti-Christian, you can talk to them about Christ, not from ‘you’re wrong I’m right,’ but from the standpoint of ‘what is a true Christian? What is Christlikeness?’ People will say, ‘That’s not what I’ve thought a Christian was. Loving others as themselves? Finding ways to relieve pain and suffering? Non-condemnational?’ Then I say to them, ‘Maybe you haven’t met a true Christian. A true Christian is like Christ.’”

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