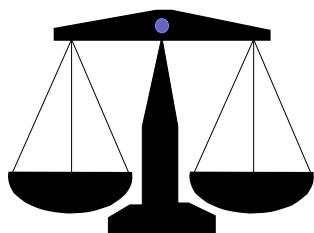


# The *Truth* About Seventh-day Adventist “*Truth*”



By Dale Ratzlaff

*Questions to ask  
your Adventist friends*

*The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist “Truth”*

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# ***The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist “Truth”***

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## ***Introduction***

There appears to be a growing move of God in the earth today that is bringing a *functional* unity into the Christian church as never before!<sup>1</sup> What the Spirit is speaking to this generation is that there is one church with many congregations. This unity will not be an organizational, structural unity, nor will it be a unity where every church jettisons its unique emphases. Rather, it will be a unity that *agrees*, on the clear fundamentals of Christian faith<sup>2</sup> yet affirms other churches which may have a different emphasis and different interpretations or understandings on the less essential elements of Christianity. Central to this unity is pastors coming together for prayer, relationship building, affirming one another, and repenting of their sectarian attitudes and “sheep stealing.” This, then, can grow into cooperative evangelistic enterprise and then we can expect to experience the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus: “That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the *world may believe* that You

sent me.”<sup>3</sup> Evidence that God is blessing this type of unity is seen in many cities of the world today.<sup>4</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs) hold teachings that mitigate against functional, inter-church cooperation that is essential at this critical time in church history.

While this booklet may appear to be *against* the SDA church, in reality it is the author’s deepest desire that it may in some small way bring positive change to this organization. It should also be noted that there are many good things within Adventism. Their emphasis on education, medical work, health, mission and giving is to be commended.

Within Adventism there is a growing group of people who no longer believe or teach all of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA church.<sup>5</sup> Most of these—especially those who are denominationally employed—are not at liberty to openly express this fact for fear of losing their influence, ministries or livelihood. The author has spoken with a number of SDA pastors and a few church leaders who have privately encouraged him to continue his effort to bring these unscriptural doctrines into sharp focus, before both the Adventist church and the Evangelical community. It is hoped that this exposure will cause the leadership of the SDA church to honestly come to grips with well-known errors and thus move SDAs toward mainstream Evangelical Christianity. However, having always claimed SDAs to be the “true church,” it will not be easy for Adventist leadership to admit doctrinal error.

It is hoped that this little work will also help Evangelicals to better understand Seventh-day Adventists. Much SDA evangelism does not accurately, or perhaps adequately, represent the real teachings of Seventh-day Adventism. Therefore, many do not

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<sup>1</sup> See Ted Haggard, *Primary Purpose*, Creation House, Lake Mary, Florida, 1995, pp. 55–103 and consider the movements of Lighthouses of Prayer, Harvest Evangelism, Campus Crusade for Christ, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, salvation by faith, the new birth through the presence and gifting of the Holy Spirit, the second coming of Christ, the coming judgment to eternal life or eternal damnation.

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<sup>3</sup> John 17:21.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Transformation* video, The Sentinel Group, Global Net Productions, 800-668-5657.

<sup>5</sup> I use “historic” SDAs to refer to the loyal, orthodox Adventists who accept all 27 Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs. See Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists: An Evangelical Resource, and Appeal to SDA Leadership*, Life Assurance Ministries, 1996, pp. 23–27 for a more comprehensive description of the four groups within Adventism.

## **Seventh-Day Adventists believe the writings of Ellen G. White are “an authoritative source of truth”**

realize that SDA teachings make it almost impossible for *historic*<sup>6</sup> SDAs and *informed*<sup>7</sup> Evangelicals to work together as Christian brothers and sisters.

When Evangelicals build relationships with SDAs with the intent of working together in joint Christian service, they need to know with what type of Adventist they are dealing. Otherwise, they may find they are in a relationship with someone more interested in converting people to Adventism than in building up the larger body of Christ.

This booklet is a concise summary of what may be considered as the eight main problems with Seventh-day Adventist doctrine and practice. Those wanting more information, documentation and illustration are encouraged to see the “Suggested Resources” listed at the end.

Evangelicals might consider Adventists to hold other questionable teachings or practices in addition to these eight.<sup>8</sup> However, those other teachings and practices are of such a nature that they do not seriously hinder *functional* church unity.

Excerpts from a number of letters received by Life Assurance Ministries have been included to allow the reader to better understand the mindset of Adventism.

### **Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:**

Dale,...I disagree with the stance of many SDAs in regard to many of the “27 Fundamentals” but I feel my time is better spent promoting Christ than in detracting anyone else...Please keep my on the mailing list...I am still open-minded.—from a Seventh-day Adventist

This is perhaps *the* underlying error of the SDA church. The *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, No. 17, includes the following statement:

...As the Lord’s messenger, her [Ellen G. White’s] writings are *a continuing and authoritative source of truth* which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis added).

SDAs<sup>10</sup> believe the writings of Ellen G. White (EGW) are inspired on the same level as the Bible.<sup>11</sup> Because she is the later inspired writer, many SDAs hold that her interpretation of the Bible is to be preferred.<sup>12</sup> While it is true that the writings of EGW contain much very good material,<sup>13</sup> it is equally true that they

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<sup>9</sup> For a complete listing of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventists, see *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD, 1996, pp. 5–27.

<sup>10</sup> Historic SDAs.

<sup>11</sup> In recent years much new evidence has surfaced which demonstrates the many problems associated with the writings of Ellen White. In order to keep these as “inspired writings,” SDAs have had to liberalize their concept of inspiration to allow for such things as massive plagiarism which was denied, historical errors, suppressed visions, inaccurate statements, and contradictions to the Bible.

<sup>12</sup> “Adventists who deny this historic equation (Bible study + EGW confirmation = Adventist distinctives), for whatever reason, are forced to go back into the confusion....To ignore history would put us back to the same uncertain playing field where all other churches are each contending that it alone believes in ‘the Bible and the Bible alone.’ The deep doctrinal struggles within Evangelicalism today are fought by strongly convinced men and women who believe their positions rest on the Bible only. Without Ellen White, that same impasse would continue to fragment the Adventist denomination.” Quoted from Robert S. Folkenburg, *From the G.C. President*, “Off the Back Burner,” January, 22–April 22, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Much of the best material is copied from others. See Walter Rae, *White Lie* for many illustrations of plagiarism.

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<sup>6</sup> Who hold all 27 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

<sup>7</sup> Those who know the historic teachings of SDAs.

<sup>8</sup> Clean and unclean meats, vegetarianism, etc.

contain gross error.<sup>14</sup> Her early writings<sup>15</sup> are legalistic and very condemning of nearly all other churches. She, with others of her time, saw the Catholic Church as “Babylon” and the “Harlot” of Revelation, but she did not stop with the condemnation of the Catholic church. She called the Protestant churches which did not accept SDAs unique teaching on the three angels messages of Revelation 14 “fallen churches” and the “daughters of Babylon.”<sup>16</sup>

Ellen White did not invent SDA erroneous theology, but she cemented it into the foundation of Adventism. The writings of Ellen White support, and are often the chief support, for all of the unbiblical doctrines to be discussed later in this pamphlet. And here is the Adventist dilemma: many within Adventism would like to jettison EGW as “a continuing and authoritative source of truth” and the unbiblical doctrines supported by her writings. To do so, however, would cause a serious crisis in Adventism. To avoid this crisis, Adventist leadership has used over a dozen different tactics of dealing with *known error* without ever admitting to the error.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:**

Hello, I just wanted to thank God that He chose you to help expose the Seventh-day Adventist church as “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” Let me share how Jesus removed the blinders from my eyes...It all started with a college textbook published by the Adventists on Ellen G. White. I read the chapter which talked about her contradictory statements and false prophetic statements. I was a little surprised but shrugged it off. After all she was the last day prophet, raised up to heavenly places and beholding the face of Jesus. Who was I to worry about it? After all, Satan hated the last day church, and was trying to lead me to doubt the testimonies! This would lead me to reject the special “truths” of Adventism, until I turned my back on all of them....Anyway, while I was innocently on my computer I looked up your board [web site] out of curiosity. I was shocked and amazed at all this! Shortly after this, I called C.R.I., who referred me to Watchman Fellowship. I talked with T. O. and He referred me to you. The books you sent me pointed out

how deceived I had been. I was still going through that cloudy thinking and fear, but, praise God, He used your books and my Worldwide Church of God church family’s prayers. I now realized that the fears I had of rejecting the Holy Spirit’s voice and causing Him to depart from me were unfounded...Thank you, Mr. Ratzlaff, for standing up for Jesus and the truth regardless of the consequences. God bless you, and may He use you to bless Adventists who are still buying “the White lie.” J. B.

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<sup>14</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*; Cleveland, *White Washed* for many examples.

<sup>15</sup> *Early Writings* is a title of one of EGW’s books. However, I use the term here to include all of her early writings, many of which contain much error.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, pp. 135, 140, 155, 156, 169, 172.

<sup>17</sup> See Dale Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, chapter, “Lumps Under the Rug”.

## ***The Seventh-day Adventist church claims to be the remnant church of Bible prophecy***

Historic SDAs hold that they are the true, remnant church depicted in Revelation 12. The Fundamental *Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, No. 12, entitled, “The Remnant” reads as follows:

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. *This remnant* announces the *arrival of the judgment hour*, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. *Every believer* is called to have a personal part in *this worldwide witness* (emphasis added).

Note well that it is “this remnant.” *No* other church holds the 1844 investigative judgment hour message of SDAs. This is their unique “contribution” to Christian theology.<sup>18</sup> Also, note that “every believer” is called to have a personal part in “this [SDA’s] worldwide witness.”

All Sunday-keeping churches are a part of the great “apostasy,” or “Babylon.” So even as SDAs acknowledge that, “God has His children in all churches,” they add, “but through the remnant church He proclaims a message that is to restore His true worship by calling His people *out of the apostasy* and *preparing them for Christ’s return*.”<sup>19</sup> A Christian, then, is not prepared for Christ’s return unless he has joined the remnant, the Seventh-day Adventist church.

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<sup>18</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine* for a thorough evaluation of this unbiblical, anti-gospel doctrine and/or Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*, Euangelion Press, Casselberry, Florida, 1980,

<sup>19</sup> P.G. Damsteegt, et al., *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, [Washington D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988] p. 168; emphasis added.

This one doctrine mandates the raiding of other churches. They feel called, not only to reach non-Christians, but to convert Christians to the “truths” of Adventism. Thus, their Revelation Seminars, and other evangelistic programs, are structured to get people to make a decision to join the remnant church—meaning the SDA church. Those who do are said to have finally “come into the truth.”<sup>20</sup>

It may immediately be seen how difficult it is for *informed* Evangelicals to work with *historic* Adventists who hold such teaching. It is also difficult for Adventists to *honestly* work with Evangelicals.

Traditionally, Adventists have supported their claim to be the remnant church of Bible prophecy by linking their two “proof texts” of Revelation 12:17 and 19:10.

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Rev. 12:17

From this text they seek to “prove” that the rest (remnant, KJV) have two identification marks: (1) they keep “the commandments of God” and (2) they have the “testimony of Jesus.” The commandments are interpreted to be the Ten Commandments, including the fourth commandment of the seventh-day Sabbath.

The second identification of the remnant, Adventists say, is “the testimony of Jesus.” To explain what this means, they immediately jump to Rev. 19:10 where they read,

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

From this verse they define the testimony of Jesus as the spirit of prophecy. So, they say, the remnant church will keep the Sabbath and have the spirit of prophecy. According to the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, No. 17,

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an *identifying mark* of the remnant church and was manifested in the

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<sup>20</sup> “Come into the truth” is a term frequently used by SDAs when speaking of other “Christians” who have accepted the teachings of Adventism.

ministry of *Ellen G. White*. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction...(emphasis added).

Here, right in their doctrinal statement, SDAs list the prophetic ministry of Ellen White as "an identifying mark of the remnant church."

The SDA claim to be the remnant church of Bible prophecy rests, then, upon their Sabbath keeping and their acceptance of Ellen White as "the spirit of prophecy."

Adventists fail to observe that in the writings of John, the *Greek* word, *entole*, translated "commandment" in Revelation 12:17, is *never* used for the old covenant, Ten Commandment, law. Rather John *always* refers to old covenant law by the *Greek* word, *nomos*. Translated, "law."<sup>21</sup> Thus, their claim that the Sabbath commandment is in view here is without warrant.

Adventists' use of Rev. 19:10 appears to put EGW in the place of Christ! Jesus, however, not Ellen White, is the spirit and theme of all prophecy. Note how the following Bible translations have captured this thought:

Those who bear testimony to Jesus are inspired like the prophets (*The New English Bible*).

For the truth revealed by Jesus is the inspiration of all prophecy (*Weymouth*).

For the testimony of Jesus is what inspires prophecy (*Goodspeed*).

It is the truth concerning Jesus which inspires all prophecy (*Knox*).

The purpose of all prophecy and of all I have shown you is to tell about Jesus (*Living Bible*).

Jesus is the theme and spirit of all prophecy. This text has *nothing* to do with Ellen White! Jesus said,

You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of *Me*; John 5:39.

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<sup>21</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, Life Assurance Ministries, 1995 Chapter 19, "The Sabbath and Seventh-day Adventists" for a thorough discussion of this topic and a complete listing of *entole* and *nomos* in the writings of John.

It is very clear that Adventists *misuse* both Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 in their claim to be the true, remnant church of Bible prophecy.

The reason this doctrine is so hurtful to the church at large is obvious. How can an Evangelical honestly see an Adventist as a brother in Christ when the Adventist subscribes to this fundamental belief? Remember it says, *Every believer* [this would include the Evangelical] is called to have a personal part in *this* [SDA] worldwide witness.<sup>22</sup>

### Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:

I was raised a fourth generation SDA and was a fourth generation Literature Evangelist.<sup>23</sup> I never saw the inside of a public school until my children went to them...I was already questioning some of the teachings of the SDA church so when I was home one time I went to our pastor and told him I wanted my name off the church books. He sat there for two solid hours trying to convince me that I was wrong to do this and ended his time with this statement, "I just want you to understand that once your name is off the church books you will no longer be a Christian and you will have no chance to be saved." I let him know I still considered myself a Christian to which he responded, "After your name is off the church books you will no longer be a Christian and you will have no chance of being saved."<sup>24</sup> M. R.

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<sup>22</sup> Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, No. 12.

<sup>23</sup> A Literature Evangelist in Adventism is one who sells SDA books, usually including books by Ellen G. White.

<sup>24</sup> The basis for this pastors statement comes from several quotations from Ellen G. White which state that once a person has known the special "truths" of Adventism and then rejects these "truths" they will go on to reject God and become infidels. Two examples follow: "The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. Here is the line of distinction between the worshipers of God and those who worship the beast and receive his mark..." White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 4, p. 54. "Then I was shown a company who were howling in agony. On their garments was written in large characters, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.' I asked who this company were. The angel said, 'These are they who have once kept the Sabbath and have given it up'...I saw that they had drunk of the deep waters, and fouled the residue with their feet—trodden the Sabbath underfoot—and that was why they were weighted in the balance and found wanting." White, *Early Writings*, p. 37.

## **Seventh-day Adventists teach the seventh-day Sabbath is the “seal of God”**

Revelation depicts a sharp demarcation between those who serve God and those who serve the “beast”<sup>25</sup>.

Adventists have traditionally held that the Seventh-day Sabbath is the seal of God. Ellen White on numerous occasions confirmed this in her writings. Ellen White wrote that Sabbath observance would be the “line of distinction” in the “final test” that will separate God’s end-time people who “receive *the seal of God*” and are saved, from those who “receive the mark of the beast”<sup>26</sup> and are cast into the lake of fire.

The traditional Adventist support for the seventh-day Sabbath as the seal of God comes from the common understanding of what a seal is. It is a mark which shows authenticity by (1) giving the *name* of the one in authority, (2) the *title* of the one in authority, and (3) the *dominion* of the one in authority. Seventh-day Adventists show that the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment has all of this information: “The Lord” (name), “The Lord your God” (title), “Who made the heavens and the earth, and sea and all that is in them” (dominion).

This may be good human reasoning, but the New Testament *never* speaks of the Sabbath as the seal of God. Because the Sabbath commandment was placed in the very center of the Ten Commandments, it served as the dynastic sign of the Sinaitic Covenant.<sup>27</sup> On several occasions *within the old covenant* we find the Sabbath call-

ed a *sign*. In context it is *always* the sign between God and the *sons of Israel*.<sup>28</sup>

Never is the Sabbath called a seal or a sign within the new covenant. Rather, the Holy Spirit is said to be the seal which the Christian receives when he believes.

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us in God, who also *sealed* us and gave us *the Spirit* in our hearts as a pledge (2 Cor. 1:21, 22).

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were *sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise*, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).

And do not grieve the *Holy Spirit* of God, by whom you were *sealed* for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

According to Scripture it is the Holy Spirit and not the seventh-day Sabbath that is the seal of God. According to the New Testament the seventh-day Sabbath is *not* the sign which is to be remembered. Rather, Christians are to celebrate the Lord’s Supper (the new covenant sign)<sup>29</sup> in remembrance of Christ.

Again, the reason for pointing this out is that this teaching hinders *functional* church unity. There is no major problem with Christians worshiping on Saturday. However, when SDAs make their Sabbath keeping a sign that they are right and everyone else is wrong, then that teaching becomes very divisive. This is especially so when such great importance is placed on a divergent teaching. It is clear that the Epistles never place positive emphasis on Sabbath keeping. Never do they explain how the Sabbath is to be kept and Sabbath breaking is never included in any New Testament lists of sins.<sup>30</sup> This certainly seems strange if the Sabbath, as Adventists claim, is to be *the* testing truth for *all* Christians in the last days.<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>25</sup> Rev. 7:2, 3.

<sup>26</sup> White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, p. 605; emphasis added. Describing a supposed vision direct from God, she wrote, “I saw that the Holy Sabbath *is*, and will be, the *separating wall* between the true Israel of God [in context, true Christians] and *unbelievers*” (*Early Writings*, p. 33; emphasis added). She also wrote that Sabbath observance “was of sufficient importance to draw a line between *the people of God* and *unbelievers*” (*Ibid.*, p. 85; emphasis added).” See [www.watchman.org/sdapro.html](http://www.watchman.org/sdapro.html).

<sup>27</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, pp. 40–43 and Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, pp. 13, 14.

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<sup>28</sup> Ex. 31:13, 17; Ez. 20:12, 20.

<sup>29</sup> See Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:19, 20.

<sup>30</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, and D.A. Carson *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, Zondervan.

<sup>31</sup> “The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty...when the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between

Apostle Paul teaches that the Sabbath is to be included with the other holy days of the old covenant and serves only as a shadow of Christ.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:**

I am a second generation Adventist, over 50 and just realizing the truth about the SDA church. Like most others I have read about, I endorsed the SDA church with my whole heart and served in about every office. I was grounded and no one could “pry” me away from “The Truth.” I won’t tell you the whole story but I know I am led by the Holy Spirit. Through a process I was led to your books and cried as I read. There were times when I had to put them down for a day to process what I had read. I’m still searching and studying. I stopped going to the SDA church about eight or nine months ago—I am now going to a Sunday church and am really being fed. It is unbelievable how free I feel to be the person God intended me to be. My mother and some other family members, “hardcore” SDAs, are hurt and tearful, sure I’m going to hell and on and on!! I’m sure no different treatment than most others who have left the SDA church...Thanks for standing for the truth years ago and for all the research and studying you have done and shared with others. Please recommend other books to me that will help me understand where I have come from. It is very difficult at times to break with the old “bones” of legalism. I can see God opening a great light in my life, and I need to learn how to interpret/test Scripture for myself. Thanks for any help you can give me. M. H.

### ***Seventh-day Adventists teach that Sunday keeping is, or will become, the “mark of the beast”***

The flip side of Adventist’s teaching that the Sabbath is the Seal of God is their teaching that Sunday observance is, or will become, the mark of the beast. Remembering that the writings of Ellen G. White are “a continuing and authoritative source of truth,” consider the following statement:

The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord’s memorial of creation...The mark of the beast is the opposite—the observance of the first day of the week. This mark distinguishes those who acknowledge the supremacy of the papal authority from those who acknowledge the authority of God.<sup>33</sup>

On one hand, Adventists want Christians to consider SDAs to be within mainstream Christianity. On the other hand, SDAs condemn all Sunday keeping mainstream churches. Many Evangelicals, not knowing the real teachings of SDAs, consider them as mainstream Christians or even Evangelicals. Their mainstream appearance, however, is only a façade. Deeper understanding reveals their real teachings are an unbreachable “separating wall.”

The Adventist teaching that the Sabbath is the seal of God and Sunday observance is, or will become, the mark of the beast, while completely unbiblical, is one of the most effective magnets Adventist preachers have in their evangelistic tool box. Coupled with other distinctive doctrines such as the SDA church being the remnant church of Bible prophecy, it has tremendous drawing power. Adventist evangelists quote the frightening description of those who receive the mark of the beast.

And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark

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those who serve God and those who serve him not.” White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

<sup>32</sup> See Col. 2:16 and Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, pp. 247–258.

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<sup>33</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 117.



on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”<sup>34</sup>

Then, with this large lever of fear, they put the squeeze on those attending their Revelation Seminars and other evangelistic programs. Their appeal goes something like this: “You must come out of Babylon (Roman Catholicism) and leave the daughters of Babylon (the fallen Sunday-keeping Protestant churches) in order to avoid the mark of the beast. If you want to receive the seal of God you must begin keeping the Seventh-day Sabbath and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church which is God’s true, remnant church of Bible prophecy.” Thus, SDA doctrine is often the point of decision rather than faith in *Jesus Christ*. While SDAs do preach Christ,<sup>35</sup> the strong pull of their evangelistic magnet is their exclusive, unbiblical doctrines.

#### **Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:**

Dear Mr. Ratzlaff, I just left the SDA church after having only been in it for one and one half years. They had me so brain washed, I was afraid every day of the so-called Sunday Law that they told me about. I started praying every day for God to let me know the truth. I also prayed that if the Sunday Law was going to be passed, that God would let me die so I would not have to go through it. I did not know if I would pass the test when the time came and that I would go to church on Sunday to keep from being put in jail or tortured and then go to hell. I feel and look like I have aged ten years in the past year and a half. Then some time ago God put into my heart to research Ellen White. When I did that I saw what she said was not true. I left the church three weeks ago and asked my name be removed from the membership list. I feel as if I have been in bondage. Now I can’t sleep because I am so brainwashed...Can you help me? C. G.

## ***Seventh-day Adventists teach that Daniel 8:14 refers to October 22, 1844, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and start of the “investigative judgment”***

The *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, No. 23, “Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” describes this doctrine as follows:

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who, among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent.

Many SDA theologians, administrators and pastors know there is *no* biblical support for this doctrine and many will admit to this fact

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<sup>34</sup> Rev. 14:9-11

<sup>35</sup> Especially “Evangelical Adventists.”

in private conversation with trusted people.<sup>36</sup> However, this doctrine serves as the very foundation of Adventism and is strongly endorsed by Ellen White who called Daniel 8:14 “the central pillar of Adventism.”<sup>37</sup> It is the glue that holds the central message of Adventism—the three angels messages of Revelation 14—together. Many feel that to jettison this teaching would be to commit denominational suicide. After all, how can the “central pillar” of Adventism be error?

The investigative judgment doctrine is like an octopus with tentacles reaching into every aspect of SDA theology. Following is a summary of what is included in this doctrine. Those who want more detail with the supporting references quoted, not just listed, may find these in *Cultic Doctrine* in the chapter entitled, “The Sliver.”

The Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment teaches that at His ascension Christ entered the outer apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. From that time until 1844, he performed a ministry of intercession and forgiveness analogous to that of the earthly sanctuary’s outer apartment.<sup>38</sup> In 1844 Christ entered into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary for the *first time*<sup>39,40</sup> to begin a work of investigative judgment.<sup>41</sup> This judgment deals *only* with those who have professed to believe in Jesus.<sup>42</sup> The wicked,

according to SDA theology, will be investigated during the 1000 years<sup>43</sup> and executed shortly after the close of the 1000 years of Revelation 20.<sup>44</sup> The investigative judgment starts with the cases of the dead, reaching clear back to Adam and reviews the life records of every person who has professed faith in God. Every deed is closely examined. Each succeeding generation is investigated and judged.<sup>45</sup> At some time—none know when—the cases of the dead are completed and God then moves to the cases of the living.<sup>46</sup> SDAs believe they will not know when their name comes up in judgment.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it is extremely important that they engage in no frivolous activity or sin. Every sin must be confessed. *Sins which have been forgotten and unconfessed will stand against them in the judgment.*<sup>48</sup> Their characters must demonstrate perfect obedience to the Ten Commandment law,<sup>49</sup> especially the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.<sup>50</sup> Some names in this list of professed believers will be accepted, others will be rejected.<sup>51</sup> When every person confessing faith in God has come up in review, Jesus *then* pleads his blood before the Father on behalf of those who are *found worthy*, and blots out the record of their sins from the books of heaven.<sup>52</sup> After that, not knowing if, or when, the work of investigative judgment has been completed, the righteous, still in their human state, before the second coming of Christ, will have to live in the sight of a holy God *without an intercessor.*<sup>53</sup> This completes the atonement.<sup>54</sup> Next, Jesus takes the sins of God’s people and transfers them to Satan, who, Adventists teach, is

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<sup>36</sup> The author has personally spoken with many SDA pastors, several SDA theologians and a few church administrators at the conference level who acknowledge this is not a biblical doctrine.

<sup>37</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 409.

<sup>38</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 420. See also *Early Writings*, p. 252; *Review and Herald*, 1850-03-01; 1905-11-09; *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 158.

<sup>39</sup> See Knight, *Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism*, p. 126. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 422., *Southern Watchman* 1905-01-24.

<sup>40</sup> Some Adventists make yet *another* reinterpretation in trying to harmonize EGW’s statement that Christ entered into the Most Holy Place in 1844 with the teaching of Hebrews 6:19. They state that Christ entered the Most Holy Place at His ascension to dedicate the Most Holy Place and then withdrew to the Holy Place until 1844.

<sup>41</sup> White, *Review and Herald*, 1887-03-22, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 308.

<sup>42</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 483, 486. See also *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 420.

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<sup>43</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 480, *Early Writings*, p. 292.

<sup>44</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>47</sup> White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 315.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>49</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 218.

<sup>50</sup> White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 257, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 486. See also *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 266. *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 530.

<sup>53</sup> White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 432. See also *Early Writings*, p. 280; *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, p. 198; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 614.

<sup>54</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 422.

represented by the Day of Atonement scapegoat in Leviticus 16.<sup>55</sup> Satan then bears the ultimate responsibility for all the sins he has caused the righteous to commit. He will suffer for these sins in the lake of fire and then be blotted from existence.<sup>56</sup> The investigative judgment is conducted before all the intelligences of the universe. This vindicates the character of God before all the unfallen beings.<sup>57</sup> At that time everyone will know the immutability of the law of God and the righteous character of God.<sup>58</sup>

This doctrine rests upon some twenty-two assumptions. Most of these are contrary to biblical evidence.<sup>59</sup> Not only is this doctrine unbiblical, its teachings are *contrary* to the New Testament gospel of grace.<sup>60</sup> Remember, this “work of judgment in heaven” judges *believers* by their works, and that “*every believer*” is called to have a personal part in *this* worldwide witness—the SDA church. Obviously, then, no “believer” who fails to heed the call to join the “remnant” church and participate in its witness can legitimately expect to pass this judgment if one accepts SDA theology.

The lengths to which Adventists will go to find support for this doctrine are amazing! For example, *The Clear Word Bible*<sup>61</sup> without *any* manuscript support, at Daniel 8:14, reads SDA theology right into the text! Following is this text quoted from the NASB and then from *The Clear Word Bible*.

And he said to me, “for 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored” (Daniel 8:14, NASB).

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 422. See also *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 266.

<sup>56</sup> White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 267.

<sup>57</sup> Adult Sabbath School Lessons, 1996, *Three Angels’ Messages*, p. 47.

<sup>58</sup> White, *Review and Herald*, 1901-06-18.

<sup>59</sup> See Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*, Euangelion Press, Casselberry, Florida, 1980, pp. 174–176; Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, pp. 167–182.

<sup>60</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, pp. 205–223.

<sup>61</sup> While Adventists do not want to “own” *The Clear Word Bible*, it is none-the-less a work of their hands. It was written by the chairman of theology at a denominationally owned college. It was printed by the SDA Review and Herald Publishing Association (which, one may be sure, would never contract to publish non-SDA spurious translations of the Bible such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ *New World Translation*). It was advertised in SDA periodicals. It is sold in the Adventist Book Centers across the country.

He said to him, “After two thousand three hundred *prophetic days* (or two thousand three hundred years), God will step in, proclaim *the truth about Himself* and restore the ministry of the Sanctuary *in heaven* to its rightful place. *This is when the judgment will begin, of which the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was a type*” (Emphasis supplied, Daniel 8:14, TCWB)

One can immediately see how this contrary-to-the-gospel, un-biblical, teaching creates an *insurmountable* wall prohibiting functional church unity.

### **Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:**

I just read your web page about your book on the Sabbath. I left the SDA church 10 years ago (4th generation with father and grandfather both SDA’s). When I left the church, it was after an examination of Scripture on the Sabbath. I certainly did not do such a thorough study as you have but it seemed to me that if the Sabbath was really supposed to have the emphasis that SDA’s give it, Jesus did a poor job of giving it that emphasis, especially about the Sabbath and the end times. It seems to me that one of the most damaging things about the SDA emphasis on Sabbath is the pivotal position they give it in eschatology. Perhaps it isn’t a major issue to God if some Christians just happen to worship on Saturday, but they are in grave danger of missing the important message of the whole Biblical perspective on prophecy because of the Sabbath doctrine. I am concerned about my family that is still darkened by Adventism and unprepared to see the fulfilling of prophecy before their eyes! By the way, by the time I examined the Sabbath, I had already discarded the Investigative Judgement and Ellen White. Dr. Edward Heppenstall<sup>62</sup> was like a second father to me and he is the one who showed me the fallacy of the investigative judgement. The emphasis on Ellen White was what disturbed me. When recalling material I had memorized in SDA schools I had a hard time remembering whether the source was EGW or the Bible. There was something strangely out-of-balance and subtly distorting about that. But the best part is I found I could really walk with Jesus and He could become more intimate to me than any human. Once I left the SDA church, my walk with Jesus is far more satisfying than I had ever

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<sup>62</sup> The late Dr. Heppenstall was a leading SDA theologian who taught at Andrews University. He sought to move the Seventh-day Adventist church away from the errors of early Adventism toward a more biblical model. This move, however, was short lived.

imagined was possible. Please pray that God will guide my relationships with my family so that they may be drawn to Him above their emphasis on the SDA church. I long for my parents to know Jesus

**Seventh-day Adventists  
teach soul sleep and those who believe  
in the immortality of the soul are under  
one of the two great errors of Satan**

The Adventist teaching of soul sleep is set forth in the *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, No. 25, “Death and Resurrection” as follows:

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later.

Most evangelicals believe the souls or spirits of deceased Christians go immediately “to be with the Lord.”<sup>63</sup> Then they are reunited with a resurrected body at the second coming of Christ.<sup>64</sup> Adventists, however, like Jehovah’s Witnesses, say that the souls are sleeping until the bodily resurrection. In either case, it appears, *the next conscious* moment after death, the righteous are with the Lord. It may seem, therefore, that this doctrine *by itself*, does not hinder functional church unity. However, this is not the end of the story.

Both Christians and SDAs acknowledge that in the Scriptures the word *sleep*, as applied to death, is imagery, or figurative language. The division comes over what, exactly, is the *reality* of which sleep is apt *imagery*. In real sleep, there is a real, living person present; one’s existence, thoughts, and emotions continue from the waking

and rest in His assurance...Thank for your wonderful web site. I appreciate it very much. Blessings. S. B.

state, through the sleep state, and back again into the waking state. *One’s mind is not totally inactive during sleep.* Even more important, *one’s actual existence is not interrupted.*

Christians would acknowledge the same as being true of death. There is a real person whose existence continues, however different that existence may be from this life, and whose thoughts and emotions continue, however dissociated from this life they may be.

SDAs, however, portray the reality of which sleep is figurative as essentially non-existence. Under the heading “*The Person Returns to Dust*,” a “person” is said to be an “organic unity” in which, “body and soul *only exist together*; they form an indivisible union.”<sup>65</sup> The “soul” is not an entity having an individual self-conscious identity. It is nothing more than “breath,” or “the life principle.”<sup>66</sup> Its return to God is nothing more than God withdrawing the power of life. The lifeless body, which is not a “person” by itself anyway, then rots and disintegrates in the grave. SDA doctrine therefore denies that any real “person” exists between death and resurrection. A “person” only exists in a live state. In death no actual person really exists.

This creates a philosophical and ontological problem for Seventh-day Adventism. Clearly, according to such doctrine, in death a person ceases to exist. It would be highly improper, even figuratively, to speak of a dead person “awaiting” anything, as no dead person exists. And if a person ceases to exist at death, then “resurrection” can have nothing to do with any person who has lived and died, but is the creation of another being altogether. What does it matter that in creating such a being God might fashion it to look like a previously existing person who has died? To whose advantage is it if God installs all the memories, thought patterns, even DNA structure, of such a previously existing person who has died, in His new being? All such considerations entirely miss the point. It is still a new, different being. Of what interest can such a

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<sup>63</sup> See 2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 1:21–26; 2 Tim. 1:10; Mark 12:18–27; John 6:40, 47; John 8:51; John 11:25, 26.

<sup>64</sup> See 1 Cor. 15:35–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18.

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<sup>65</sup> Damsteegt, et al., *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, p. 352; emphasis added.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

being be to one who knows his own existence will certainly come to a complete end?

Perhaps to counter this problem and the hopeless despair it necessarily entails, SDAs offer this statement:

*Death Is a Sleep.* Death is not complete annihilation; it is only a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection.<sup>67</sup>

The statement that, “death is not complete annihilation,” is disingenuous. It is not “complete” annihilation, in SDA thinking, because it is not final, but only “temporary.” But *annihilation* is final, and therefore complete, *by definition*. “Incomplete annihilation” is an oxymoron. To say, “the *person* awaits the resurrection,” is equally disingenuous. The question then begging to be answered is, “*What person?* What, actually, is ‘*awaiting* the resurrection?’” Awaiting implies anticipation. Anticipation is a function of consciousness requiring a conscious existence. Both are impossible during death according to SDA doctrine. No one and no thing *dead* “awaits” the resurrection.

Virtually all SDAs would be appalled to think their doctrine constitutes a denial of the resurrection. That conclusion, however, is inescapable when one examines their soul-sleep doctrine carefully. It denies the existence of a “person” apart from consciousness, and it denies consciousness in death. There is no such thing, then, as a dead person. When a person dies the person *ends*. If a person ends at death there can be no such thing as “eternal life” for all persons who die. Those persons are gone, period. The resurrection is not a cloning process, or the creation of a new being with no previous historical identity of its own. No other persons created in the image of the formerly living, even the *exact same image*, can bring *them* back. It is not unfair, therefore, to say that SDA doctrine on the state of the dead entails a fundamental denial of the doctrine of the resurrection as taught in the Scriptures.

Hope that another being just like oneself will someday live forever is not the “hope of eternal life” of which the Scriptures speak. How can the Christian who cherishes the glorious hope of

eternal life for himself have functional unity or Christian fellowship with those whose doctrine essentially denies any such hope?

Adventists also teach that the doctrine of immortality is one of the leading deceptions of Satan. Ellen White states that,

Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.<sup>68</sup>

Christians who believe the souls or spirits of the righteous “go to be with the Lord” at death are, according to SDAs, falling under one of the “two great errors of Satan.” This, too, makes an insurmountable wall hindering *functional* unity. How can Evangelicals and SDAs work together as Christian brothers and sisters? Would not the SDA feel duty-bound to protect the Evangelical from this great “error of Satan”?

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 352

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<sup>68</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 588. See also *Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 4, p. 405.

## **Seventh-day Adventist theology teaches “Christ + something = the Gospel”**

There are two formulas that are suggested for salvation. One is the basic Christian formula. The other is the one often promoted by the cults:

**Faith in Christ = Salvation + Good Works  
or  
Faith in Christ + Good Works = Salvation**

In Ephesians 2:8–10, Paul explains that salvation is a gift of God based on faith. But even the faith itself comes from God. Then, after salvation comes good works. Why are people saved by God’s unmerited grace? One reason, Paul says, is to do good works. Salvation caused mankind to become new creatures in Christ “unto good works.” Christians will do good works, not because they must do so to gain salvation, rather it has become their new nature. Because they have become new creatures in Christ, they will desire to do good works. Hence, the first formula is biblical.

However, it is the second formula that the cults will always use. They will place works before salvation. What works? Each group will have its own unique list that must be followed to the letter of the law, or else salvation is out of reach.<sup>69</sup>

Following are summaries of the teachings of Ellen White, whose writings “continue as an authoritative *source* of truth”: She said that William Miller’s 1843 date-setting, second-coming, message was a “saving message” and pastors who resisted this message had “the blood of souls” upon them.<sup>70</sup> Faith in Christ was not enough. They had to add to their faith the “good work” of date setting. Churches that rejected the revised 1844 sanctuary “truth” fell from God’s favor and became “Babylon” even though they continued to have faith in Christ! She said that the people in these churches were

deceived by Satan, and their prayers were useless.<sup>71</sup> Ellen White said that Christians should *never* say “I am saved.”<sup>72</sup> She said that only those who keep the Sabbath will be saved in the last days.<sup>73</sup> She taught that there will be no change in character at the second coming.<sup>74</sup> She said we are *not* saved by faith alone<sup>75</sup> and we must live a life of “perfect obedience” *before* God’s promises will be fulfilled to us (emphasis added).<sup>76</sup> While some SDAs reject this theology, it is none-the-less historic Adventist teaching endorsed by their “messenger of God,” Ellen White.

### **Excerpts from two letters to Life Assurance Ministries:**

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<sup>71</sup> White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, pp. 140, 172, 173.

<sup>72</sup> “We are *never* to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, ‘*I am saved.*’ When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. *No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God.*” (emphasis supplied) White, *The Kress Collection*, p. 120. The important thing is *why* EGW said this. “*No man can say, I am saved, until he has endured test and trial, until he has shown that he can overcome temptation.*” White, *Review and Herald*, 1890-06-17. EGW taught that only those who had *proven* they could overcome temptation could lay claim to salvation. And then she put this out of the reach of all by saying that assurance of salvation could only be had *after* the second coming.

<sup>73</sup> White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 123.

<sup>74</sup> White, *Review and Herald*, 1892-06-21.

<sup>75</sup> “Faith and works are the two oars with which we are to make our way in the Christian life. The Lord calls upon all who think they know what faith is, to be sure that they are not pulling with only one oar, and their little bark [boat] going round and round, making no progress at all. Faith without intelligent works is dead. *Faith in the healing power of God will not save unless it is combined with good works.*” (emphasis supplied) Ellen G. White, *Australasian Union Record*, 1905-10-15. “It is Satan’s studied effort to divert the minds of men from the one way of salvation,—faith in Christ, *and* obedience to the law of God.” *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 192.

<sup>76</sup> “*If* we live a life of *perfect obedience*, His promises will be fulfilled toward us.” (emphasis supplied) White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 122. “What God promises He is able at any time to perform, and the work which He gives His people to do He is able to accomplish by them. If they will live according to every word He has spoken, every good word and promise will be fulfilled unto them. *But if they come short of perfect obedience, the great and precious promises are afar off, and they cannot reach the fulfillment.*” (emphasis supplied) White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 148.

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<sup>69</sup> See Rick Branch, “Profile, Patterns In The Cults,” in *Watchman Expositor*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1994.

<sup>70</sup> White, *Early Writings*, p. 243.

Dale, I too have been an Adventist for 22 years, but some time back I discovered something was wrong. I began to see a false gospel. It took me several years of study and prayer, but I finally left. I went to an Adventist pastor and told him that I thought that SDAs had been teaching another gospel since the church's beginning. Surprisingly, he said that I was right. I asked him what can we do about it? He said there was nothing we could do as the people wouldn't listen, and that the only hope was that the young people would someday finally bring in the true gospel. I have been out of the church now for one year. Two weeks ago a leader in the church told me that he was instructed (from God) that if I didn't come back to church within one week that my wife would be taken from me. You can imagine how upset my wife and I were. She is still a member but at the rate they are going they will run her out soon. I can only thank God for the way He has dealt with me as he led me out of the church. I am a member of a Sunday church and loving every bit of it. I read your two books. They are great...It saddens me how Adventists think that I am lost now that I have left. C. S.

As a long time Christian, the Baptist churches in our area became stale, and pastors retired. So I looked for another good church—a very disappointing adventure in this county. I found 3 ABN [Three Angels Broadcasting Network] TV! I liked the music but the teaching was different. I started attending the local SDA church on Saturdays. The people at the SDA church were polite—but there was no joy, none! So, I left. I also prayed for guidance. Two things got me out of SDA doctrine for good: (1) Reading Galatians in my own NIV Bible and (2) reading your wonderful book, *Sabbath in Crisis*. Thanks for caring and praying for us. We needed it. In Christ forever. D. M.

## ***Seventh-day Adventists have deceptive practices***

It is evident that SDAs hold some unique, unbiblical teachings that are quite divergent from mainstream Christianity. It should also be evident that these teachings make an insurmountable wall hindering *functional* church unity. However, Adventists do not want to *appear* to be that divergent! Rather, they want to be seen by Christendom as within the mainstream. In order to do this, they have become very subtle in their evangelism. Seldom are their Revelation Seminars advertised as Adventist evangelistic meetings. The Voice of Prophecy, Faith for Today, It Is Written, The Quiet Hour, Amazing Facts and other SDA media programs are often not advertised as Adventist programs. These programs often leave out of their messages some of the erroneous doctrines outlined in this booklet. First, they want to set the hook, then after they have the fish in the boat, they tell them “the rest of the story.” I have talked with many Seventh-day Adventists or former Seventh-day Adventists who were never told about all the unbiblical doctrines, including the acceptance of Ellen White as a continuing and authoritative source of truth, until *after* they were baptized into the church.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> At the recent SDA General Conference held in Toronto, Canada in June/July, 2000, a revised Baptismal Certificate and accompanying vow was adopted. If this new procedure is followed, everyone joining the SDA church should be aware of Adventist doctrine. The new instructions read: “Candidates for baptism or those being received into fellowship by profession of faith shall affirm their acceptance of the doctrinal beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the presence of the church or other properly appointed body. The Minister or elder should address the following questions to the candidate(s) whose reply may be by verbal assent or by raising the hand.” Then follows a thirteen-point vow. Included in these thirteen points are: “(6) Do you accept the Ten Commandments as the transcript of the character of God and a revelation of His will? Is it your purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation? (8) Do you accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of prophecy is one of

Not only are Adventists somewhat misleading in their evangelistic approach, their history is literally riddled with deceptive practices. For example, they have suppressed one of Ellen White's visions because it clearly teaches a shut door of salvation after 1844.<sup>78</sup> In the book *Early Writings* is recorded Ellen White's first vision. What many Adventists do not know is that part of this vision has been deleted, even though the preface states otherwise.<sup>79</sup> When honest Adventist leaders learned of some of these errors and left the church, they were usually castigated and given over to Satan.<sup>80</sup> In fact, Ellen White went so far as to state,

When the power of God testifies [has told Ellen White] as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth. No after suppositions contrary to the light God has given are to be entertained.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, once Ellen White has clearly supported a given Adventist teaching, based upon a "vision" or "instruction" from "God" that teaching is to stand forever. One now understands how difficult it will be for Adventists to admit error, especially the foundational, fundamental doctrines upon which this church was founded which received the prophetic stamp of Ellen White's approval. The horns on this dilemma are sharp indeed!

Adventists know the problems associated with their doctrines, especially their investigative judgment doctrine. When working on the SDA Bible Commentary Adventist scholars became acutely aware that this doctrine had *no biblical basis*. In fact, a super-secret committee of Adventism's top scholars was appointed by the General Conference president to solve their Daniel 8:14/1844 problem. They worked on this problem for five years, could not

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the identifying marks of the remnant church? (11) Do you know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Do you purpose, by the grace of God to fulfill His will by ordering your life in harmony with these principles? (13) Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship? Do you desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world church?"

<sup>78</sup> Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, p. 129, 130.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147, 148.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187, 188.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188; White, Loma Linda Manuscript No. 150.

solve it, disbanded, left no minutes and were instructed to continue to teach the investigative judgment based upon their "traditional assumptions."<sup>82,83</sup> The church has tried to make it *appear* this problem has been solved by publishing a huge, multi-volume "scholarly work." However, it is riddled with assumptions. Also, according to one member of SDAs Biblical Research Institute Committee, it either tended to ignore serious questions about Adventist doctrine, or it would turn the problem over to a naïve scholar who would defend without question the traditional teaching.

If someone presented a paper pointing toward a conclusion at variance with the church's teaching, however, it was just as quickly relegated to the denomination's archival collection, never to surface again.<sup>84</sup>

*Cultic Doctrine* lists and illustrates some seventeen ways Adventists have dealt with known error. Yet the church has never, to this author's knowledge, publicly admitted doctrinal error. The reason is that it would create a crisis of faith among the laity who believe its historic teachings.<sup>85</sup>

#### **Excerpt from a letter to Life Assurance Ministries:**

I've been reading like crazy. Read the "Cultic" book in one sitting! You can imagine my surprise at every turn...Why did they have to lie to us? Don't these people understand the damage they've done? I almost turned my back on Christ forever because of my confusion. I am going to try to expose some of my family to this information. I have never been so confident of the hand of God in my life. I have relayed some of the information to \_\_\_\_\_. She is amazed at some of the things I have told her. Thank-you for your courage and honesty...Why have so many tried to keep the darkness around us?

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<sup>82</sup> Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, Chapter, "Lumps Under the Rug."

<sup>83</sup> Remember there are 22 assumptions needed to support this doctrine as taught by Ellen White. Most of these are contrary to evidence.

<sup>84</sup> See Jerry Gladson, *A Theologian's Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*.

<sup>85</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, Chapter 11 for a complete list and explanation.



## Summary:

One can readily see how these SDA teachings militate against functional church unity. For all intents and purposes, Historic Adventists,<sup>86</sup> who believe the twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church, cannot work hand in hand with Evangelicals and see them as Christian bothers and sisters. Rather, the Adventist will always have a hidden, or not so hidden, agenda to convert the Evangelical to Adventist “truth.” Adventists cannot see world evangelism as something that is happening through many Christian denominations, rather, it is measured only by Adventist success as others “come into the truth”—their “truth”.

If Adventists really believed their message is as important and biblical as they claim, then why not openly and publicly proclaim that message? Why not call an inter-denominational Bible Conference and invite other Christian scholars to “check out” Adventist truth? What is the need for using so much deception in Adventist evangelism?

Adventists need to be honest with their history. They are quick to promote the keeping of the “commandments of God,” meaning of course, the Ten Commandments, with undue emphasis on the fourth. Yet it appears that often this church has not been honest in the way it has dealt with those who uncovered the truth—or should it be errors—of Adventism,<sup>87</sup> nor has it been honest with its uninformed laity.<sup>88</sup>

Evangelicals would do well to thoroughly investigate the beliefs of Adventists before working in unity with them in any Christian

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<sup>86</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, pp. 23–26 for a more in-depth definition of the four groups within Adventism.

<sup>87</sup> Character assassination has been the pattern of dealing with leaders who have left Adventism.

<sup>88</sup> Many of the laity trust Adventist scholars to be totally honest and truthful in their presentations. Often, the whole truth is not told. Usually, only that which supports the SDA movement is given. See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, pp. 241–254.

endeavor. Following are some questions that could be asked to ascertain their real doctrines:

1. Do you believe that the writings of Ellen White are a continuing and authoritative source of truth?
2. Do you believe that the SDA church is *the* remnant church of Bible prophecy?
3. Do you believe that the seventh-day Sabbath is the seal of God for all new covenant Christians?
4. Do you believe that Sunday worship is, or will become, the mark of the beast?
5. Do you believe in the 1844 investigative judgment doctrine?
6. Do you hold that Christians who believe the soul or spirit goes to be with the Lord at the point of death are living under one of Satan’s great delusions?
7. Which is correct: faith in Christ + good works = salvation, or faith in Christ = salvation + good works?

### Excerpts from letters to Life Assurance Ministries:

Dale, You have little time left to throw away the lie you have been espousing and return to the God of love and truth. Time is running out for you, you are a lost man.—from an SDA pastor

Dale, I haven’t met you, but I wanted to let you know how much your book helped me sort out questions I had about Adventist theology for many years. I knew in my heart (from my theological training) that there were some real problems with much of Adventist theology. Although I came to similar conclusions, on my own (of course, with the Holy Spirit’s guidance), your books really helped to bring it all together! I’m presently working with nine Adventists, on line, who are looking for answers, which I’m directing to your web site. Keep the faith.—from another SDA pastor

Dear Mr. Ratzlaff, bought your Sabbath book when it first came out several years ago, and it helped me make the final break. I was a fourth generation Adventist, and taught at Andrews University...and Pacific Union College...I also worked for the Adventist Health System. I have sought truth all my life, and tried with all my heart and sole to be a

perfect Seventh-Day Adventist Christian. But the more I studied Scripture, the more I realized that Adventists held doctrines that were not Biblical. Two years ago, after much heart searching and prayer, I left the Adventist church. I felt a sense of freedom that I have never known before. I worship in a church where people really love each other, and earnestly seek to do the will of God. I recently read your *Cultic Doctrine* book, and could not agree with it more. It is so sad that so many Seventh-day Adventists do not really understand the Gospel. They do not realize that the essence of Christianity is a living relationship with a risen Savior, Jesus Christ. And that through moment by moment surrender to the Holy Spirit we can be the true humans that

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### **Books Published By Life Assurance Ministries:**

*A Theologian's Journey from Seventh-day Adventism to Mainstream Christianity*—by Jerry Gladson, Ph.D., 400 pages, \$17.95\* ISBN 0-9627546-4-1. Wow! This is a must-read eye opener! Dr. Gladson was an SDA theologian, professor and pastor serving an important role at the central core of Adventist scholarship for many years. Drawing from his meticulously kept journals, Dr. Gladson describes events at the center of the recent crisis in Adventism. He has done something few other scholars have been able to do. He has combined careful, detailed research with a gripping, narrative style of writing. The reader is forced to crawl under the skin of Dr. Gladson, see through his eyes and feel the trauma of having to choose between career and conscience. One cannot put the book down until finished. This book, *more than any*

God intended us to be. Then we can be obedient to God and fulfill His desire that we love Him with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves. I pray daily for my Christian brothers and sisters in the Adventist Church, and the many people in it who are unsure of their salvation, caught up in legalism and are afraid of God. I also cry for the youth, who reject God because of the kind of God the Adventist Church portrays. Well, I must close, and not waste your time. But I want to thank you for all that you have done for me and many others to help us find a closer walk with God, and escape the cultic Adventist church. May God richly bless you as you continue your ministry.

*other book published to date.*<sup>89</sup> uncovers the hidden, toxic, core of Adventism.

*The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists: An Evangelical Resource, An Appeal to SDA Leadership*—by Dale Ratzlaff, 388 pages, \$14.95 \* ISBN 0-9627546-9-2 This book reviews the early beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It documents how Ellen White—the prophetess of the SDA church—gave a glowing, comprehensive endorsement of William Miller’s Bible study methods, his conclusions, and his message, and then lists Miller’s fifteen “biblical proofs” that Christ would return in 1843. It follows the flip-flop teachings of the “shut door” of mercy, listing facts unknown to many SDAs and Evangelicals. It traces the development of the SDA doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment—Adventism’s unique “contribution” (they say) to Christianity. It then contrasts this SDA doctrine with the biblical teaching of the judgment and the gospel. It discloses many of the early and continuing errors of Adventism and enumerates eighteen ways Ellen White and/or the SDA church have tried to cover up or excuse these errors, including errors in the “visions” of Ellen White. Many Seventh-day Adventists, including Adventist pastors, have written or called, expressing their appreciation for this book. Many hope the SDA church will jettison its false teachings.

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<sup>89</sup> Dr. Gladson says that *Cultic Doctrine* makes a stronger statement about the cultic core of Adventism.

***Sabbath in Crisis***—by Dale Ratzlaff, 352 pages. ISBN 0-9627546-0-9 **\$14.95\*** is an easy to read, thorough, biblical study of the gospel, the old and new covenants, and the Sabbath. It has had a positive impact on thousands of lives, hundreds of churches, and even one denomination. Readers of *Sabbath in Crisis* will have their faith strengthened in the truth of Scripture and the centrality of Christ and His sacrifice for sin. They will have a new understanding of the “rest” of grace, and the need for regular church attendance and Christian fellowship. *Sabbath in Crisis* has proved helpful for those who are studying through the issues relative to a literal interpretation of the fourth commandment. It will answer questions many people have regarding “the true church,” “the testing truth,” “the seal of God” and the gospel. It is must reading for anyone with an interest in, or a question about, the Sabbath.

***White Washed—Uncovering the Myths of Ellen G. White***—by Sydney Cleveland, 230 pages, **\$12.95\*** ISBN 0-9627546-8-4. Mr. Cleveland pastored in the SDA church for some ten years. He shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the writings of Ellen White disagree with Scripture on a number of points, including some fundamental to faith. He shows that many of Adventism’s sacred traditions about Ellen White are simply myths. Pastor Cleveland lays out before his readers evidence that church scholars and leaders have known about the problems and errors in Ellen White’s writings for many years. However, he documents that the church leaders covered over these facts, not wanting to tarnish her prophetic image for fear it might cause a “crisis” in Adventism. *White Washed* is newly revised in perfect-bound book form.

***The Truth About Adventist “Truth”—Questions to Ask Your Adventist Friends***—by Dale Ratzlaff, 44 pages, **\$3.95\*** each; 2 or more **\$2.95\*** each; **In lots of 50 or more only 1.95 cents\* each!** ISBN 0-9627546-3-3. [This booklet]

#### **Other Materials Offered By Life Assurance Ministries**

**SDA Video “Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind The Church”** Approximately 50 minutes, **\$19.95\*** (Available in both VHS and PAL format) This is a hard-hitting, eye-opening documentary video. It explores the teaching of the Seventh-day

Adventist church and examines the claims of the religion’s founder, Adventism’s late prophetess, Ellen G. White. It compares her unique beliefs with biblical truth. You will meet a number of former SDA pastors and church leaders, many of them were third or fourth generation Seventh-day Adventists. Discover what happened when they embarked on a journey to uncover the truth about their organization and SDA’s unique teachings. You will be shocked by what they found. Recommended by Dr. James Kennedy.

***Life of Mrs. E.G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet, Her False Claims Refuted***—by D. M. Canright, 291 pages, **\$12.95\*** ISBN 0-9664531-0-7. This was written the year of Canright’s death in 1919. It is not to be confused with Canright’s other well-known Book, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced. The Life of Mrs. E. G. White* is invaluable in filling in missing gaps in SDA history—gaps which the Adventist church would like to forget.

***White Out***—by Dirk Anderson, 96 pages, **\$9.95\*** This is another must-read book for those who want to know the full truth about Ellen White. Mr Anderson has compiled many historical documents about Ellen White and early Adventism. He compares these records with those passed down by the SDA denomination. You will be amazed at the difference! This is a behind-the scenes look at how a prophet’s failed visions, mistaken writings, and unfulfilled predictions were covered up and concealed by her closest associates. You will find much new material, not found in other books.

***The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day***—by H. M. Riggle, 160 pages, **\$7.95\*** This is an old book but remains an easy to read excellent resource for those who want more biblical answers to the Sabbath question. This book has material that is not in *Sabbath in Crisis*. Likewise, *Sabbath in Crisis* has much material that is not in this book. Read both books and your questions will be answered!

***Prophetess of Health***—by Ronald Numbers, M.D., Ph. D., **\$19.95\*** This book explodes the myths surrounding Ellen White and her health reform visions. Find out the real sources for Mrs. White’s health messages. Written by former Loma Linda professor of Medical History, Dr. Ronald Numbers. A *must read* for any

Seventh-day Adventist serious about learning the truth about Mrs. White.

***Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement and The Investigative Judgment***—by Desmond Ford, Ph. D., 600 pages, **\$8.00\*** This book contains material not easy to come by elsewhere. While some parts are difficult to read, those who want to do a thorough study of this topic will find this invaluable source material.

***The White Lie***—by Walter T. Rea, 409 pages **\$15.00\*** This is a well-documented work proving beyond the shadow of doubt that much, if not most, of the writings of Ellen White were copied from others. That which she claims to have received from God in vision often can be traced to the works of others.

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*Then you will know the truth,  
and the truth will set you free!* —John 8:32