

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The Puzzle of Seventh-day Adventists

WALTER MARTIN

Quick Facts on Seventh-day Adventists

- SDA believe in the Spirit of Prophecy, which was the anointing upon their founder, Ellen G. White, as the proper interpretation of Scripture. But the Bible is inerrant and superior to White's writings.
- The doctrine on the Trinitarian Godhead is orthodox.
- The doctrine of hell and eternal torment of the wicked is exchanged for soul-sleep. There is a heaven for true believers.
- SDA teach an aberrational doctrine concerning the completion of Christ's atonement, who the "sin-bearer" is in Scripture, and Christ's present work in Heaven.
- Salvation requires personal works combined with God's grace.

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Preface

In a volume such as this dealing with the problem of non-Christian cults, the question might logically be asked, "Why include Seventh-day Adventism, especially since the writer has classified them in a full-length volume as a Christian denomination?"

The answer to this is that for over a century Adventism has borne a stigma of being called a non-Christian cult system. Whether or not this was justified in the early development of Adventism, this has already been discussed at length in an earlier book,¹ but it should be carefully remembered that the Adventism of today is different in not a few places from the Adventism of 1844, and with that change the necessity of new evaluation comes naturally.

Together with the Evangelical Foundation (founded by the late Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse and publishers of the now-defunct *Eternity* magazine), we conducted a thorough new evaluation of the Seventh-day Adventists several years ago. The results of that new evaluation were presented comprehensively in the book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* and then later in the previous editions of this volume.

It is my conviction that one cannot be a true Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Christian Scientist, etc., and be a Christian in the biblical sense of the term; but it is perfectly possible

¹ Walter Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960).

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to be a Seventh-day Adventist and be a true follower of Jesus Christ despite certain heterodox concepts, which will be discussed.

Such Christian leaders as Louis T. Talbot, M. R. DeHaan, John R. Rice, Anthony A. Hoekema, J. K. Van Baalen, Herbert Bird, and John R. Gerstner have taken the position that Adventism is in fact a cult system; whereas, the late Donald Grey Barnhouse, myself, E. Schuyler English, Ruth Tucker, and Josh McDowell (*Understanding the Cults: A Handbook on Today's Religions* and *The Deceivers*) and quite a few others have concluded the opposite.

Since the opposing view has had wide circulation over a long period of time, I felt it was necessary to include here Seventh-day Adventism as a proper counterbalance—presenting the other side of Adventism and representing the theology of Adventism as the Adventists themselves believe it and not as many critics have caricatured it.

~Evangelical church leadership does not always agree about how to categorize Seventh-day Adventism. Indeed, some fine counter-cult ministries classify it as a cult, but others do not, and the following gives sound, reasonable arguments in that regard for the researcher to carefully examine. Part of the ambiguity arises from differing definitions of the words *cult* and *cultic*. (See chapter 1 for the theological definition governing this volume.) Others come from a theological position that may carry the bias that Arminianism is not within the larger Christian sphere, but is heretical, therefore, such a bias may cloud a fair review of Adventism.~

Stating that they began cultic and moved into evangelical thinking is not to be construed in any sense of the term as an endorsement of the entire theological structure of Seventh-day Adventism, a portion of which is definitely out of the mainstream of historical Christian theology and which I have taken pains to refute. But I believe it is only fair and ethical to consider both sides of an extremely difficult and provocative controversy, which shows very little sign of abating in our day.

In fact, since the early 1970s the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has seen turbulence, both administratively and doctrinally, that is more extensive than any turmoil in the organization's history. Administratively, there have been a number of Adventist leaders and pastors who have been removed from their positions because of supposed or proven improper financial activities, including misappropriation of funds. On the United States federal government level, the IRS, SEC, FBI, and Justice Department have all initiated investigations, and some Seventh-day Adventist conference administrators may even face trial for fraud. Doctrinally, the church has developed a large rift between those members and leaders who are solidly within the evangelical Christian camp and those members and leaders who, because of their emphasis on

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works-righteousness, legalism, and the prophetic status accorded to founder Ellen G. White, may well move the denomination over time outside of the evangelical camp and perhaps even into actual cultism.

Since I have always stressed the importance of doctrinal integrity in my evaluations of religious movements, the doctrinal upheaval in Adventism is of special concern. Consequently, on February 16, 1983, I wrote the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.), calling for the Conference's public and official statement reaffirming or denying the authority of the Adventist book *Questions on Doctrine*² that was the representative Adventist publication on which I based my earlier evaluation and book. On April 29, 1983, W. Richard Leshner, vice-president of the General Conference, responded in a personal letter. His reply read, in part:

You ask first if Seventh-day Adventists still stand behind the answers given to your questions in *Questions on Doctrine* as they did in 1957. The answer is yes. You have noted in your letter that some opposed the answers given then, and, to some extent, the same situation exists today. But certainly the great majority of Seventh-day Adventists are in harmony with the views expressed in *Questions on Doctrine*.

Secondly, you addressed the question of the interpretation of Scripture in relation to the writings of Ellen White. As an attested agent of the prophetic gift we believe communication based on Ellen White's revelatory experience to be trustworthy and dependable. However, we do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture. We still hold with the statements on Ellen White included in *Questions on Doctrine*.

On the basis of the above letter, dialogue with several Adventist leaders, and the continuing state of flux within Adventism itself, I must, for the time being, stand behind my original evaluation of Seventh-day Adventism as presented comprehensively in my first book on the subject and later in this volume. Only events not yet unfolded, but within the knowledge of the Lord himself, will determine whether my evaluation will need to be revised in the future. It is my prayer that the aberrational currents within contemporary Adventism will not prevail and that Adventism will continue to be an evangelical, albeit unique, Christian denomination.

It was Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse who said that simply because a person is a member of a specific denomination there is no reason to suppose that the entire denomination is represented by that person's theology, nor is it proper to assume that because there are

² *Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957).

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heretical Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, etc., that all such denominations are therefore heretical.

To expand upon this we might say that simply because a denomination is Christian in its profession does not guarantee that all members of that denomination are Christian by their confession and experience. Hence, it is our position that Seventh-day Adventism as a denomination is essentially Christian in a sense that all denominations and groups professing Christianity are Christian if they conform to the classical mission of Christianity as given in the Bible and the creeds and counsels of the Christian church. But this does not mean that all Baptists, all Methodists, all Episcopalians, all Lutherans, or all Adventists are necessarily Christians. This is a matter between the individual and God and is to be viewed in the light of the revelation of Scripture and the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

~In 1988 and 1989, Walter Martin and a Christian Research Institute staff writer, Kenneth R. Samples, engaged in academic discussions with a group of Seventh-day Adventist scholars in Loma Linda, California.³ Mr. Samples summarized his and Dr. Martin's position in an article for the *Christian Research Journal* (Dr. Martin was the journal's publisher):

By the mid-1970s, two distinct factions had emerged within SDA. Traditional Adventism ... and Evangelical Adventism. ...

Because of the controversy that has raged within SDA over the past few decades, many who are aware of the Barnhouse/Martin evaluation in the 1950s have asked if this position should be revised or significantly changed ... It is our position that

³ This updated section gives Walter Martin's final consensus about Seventh-day Adventism. After his passing, a Christian filmmaker, traditional Adventists, and some ex-SDA members launched harsh and false attacks upon Dr. Martin and his Seventh-day Adventist position. The film/video *Seventh-day Adventism: The Spirit Behind the Church*, (Hemet, CA: Jeremiah Films, 1999), stated the following while showing photographs of Walter Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse: "During the 1950s, certain well-known evangelical Christian ministers approached the Seventh-day Adventist hierarchy in an effort to find out the true nature of their doctrinal beliefs. In a gesture similar to the Mormons, the Adventist leaders desiring the approval of the Christian community at large, deceptively espoused the evangelical view of salvation by grace alone." This section proves that the film/video evidently failed to read *The Kingdom of the Cults* and listen to Walter Martin in print and word, since his teachings refute their false claim. Unlike their biased, unfair, and sensational portrayal, which commits numerous logical fallacies, Walter Martin was thorough, consulting with several qualified Christian scholars for assistance, and, while showing God's grace and love, he was firm and unbending when it came to the Bible and with relentless tenacity held the SDA scholars to the biblical text until they provided answers of affirmation or denial on each subject covered. And, unlike other writers, Dr. Martin addressed both sides of the cult controversy for a balanced study.

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the evaluation given by Barnhouse and Martin still stands for that segment of Adventism which holds to the position stated in *Questions on Doctrine*, and further expressed in the Evangelical Adventist movement of the last few decades. . . .

Traditional Adventism, on the other hand, which seems to have gained the support of many administrators and leaders ... appears to be moving further away from a number of positions taken in *Questions on Doctrine*. While Adventist officials have stated that the denomination stands by *Questions on Doctrine*, some of these same leaders have disfellowshipped scores of Adventists for affirming portions of *Questions on Doctrine*. Instead of upholding *Questions on Doctrine*, some leaders within the denomination have referred to it as “damnable heresy.” . . .

Besides their compromising stance on justification, Traditional Adventism seems bent on making Ellen G. White the infallible interpreter of Scripture. Though this has never been the official position of the church ... Unfortunately, many Adventists see the writings of Ellen White as an infallible shortcut to scriptural understanding. Adventists must understand that if they elevate Ellen White to the position of infallible interpreter, then the dramatic irony of the ages has come true—SDA has a Pope.

Is Traditional Adventism Cultic?

With respect to the charge that Traditional Adventism is a non-Christian cult, it must be emphasized that the structure of Adventism is largely orthodox (accepting the Trinity, Christ’s deity, virgin birth, bodily resurrection, etc.). Presently, however, it would appear that Traditional Adventism is at least aberrant, confusing or compromising biblical truth (e.g., their view of justification, the nature of Christ, appealing to an unbiblical authority). It must also be stated that if the traditional camp continues in its departure from *Questions on Doctrine*, and in promoting Ellen White as the church’s infallible interpreter, then they could one day be fully deserving of the title “cult,” as some Adventists recognize. ... If those in Adventist leadership who love the Reformation gospel (and there are still many) do not speak up and stand for their convictions, Adventism has little hope, because Traditional Adventism is theologically bankrupt. Its perverted gospel robs Adventist Christians of assurance and puts them on a treadmill of trying to measure up to God’s holy law in order to be saved.

Our criticism of Adventism should not be interpreted as an attack from an enemy, but rather concerned words from a friend, who earnestly prays that the present leaders of

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SDA will honor Scripture and the gospel of grace above their own denominational distinctives.⁴

Not all Seventh-day Adventist leaders were pleased with the above article, but they were willing to talk, so six months later, on January 26, 1989, a meeting took place with Walter Martin, Kenneth Samples, and a large body of Seventh-day Adventists, in Loma Linda, California, to discuss this article and the future of traditional and evangelical Adventists. The following month Dr. Martin and former Adventist scholar, Dr. Desmond Ford, an evangelical, held open meetings for two evenings in Riverside, California. Dr. Martin affirmed the content of the above CRJ article and also spoke firmly about the schism in Seventh-day Adventism:

Just so that there would be no doubt about it, I did a revision of the *Kingdom of the Cults* (1985), and I sent a letter to the General Conference. I said, 'Do you or do you not stand behind what you said in *Questions on Doctrine*, yes or no? I reproduced their letter, 'we stand behind what we've said. That's what we believe.' Now we have two affirmations . . .

In *Questions on Doctrine* the denomination affirmed that Jesus Christ had a perfect human nature and that it was heresy to teach that Jesus Christ had a sinful human nature. . . .

As a result of the 1950s meeting that produced *Questions on Doctrine* a firestorm broke and sides were chosen, whether or not Martin or Barnhouse were telling the truth and the Adventists, or whether the critics were telling the truth and we'd all been taken in and lied to.

I don't believe that we were taken in. I don't believe that we were lied to, but I will tell you this. There is a great disparity between the affirmations of Seventh-day Adventists in specific areas of theology and the practice of that theology in their denomination. That must be recognized from the outset, particularly in relationship to Ellen G. White, who has been given a position that she never took herself, and as a result of that, it has caused ... great suffering in the denomination. Why? Because while affirming in *The Kingdom of the Cults* (1985) that they stand behind the *Questions on Doctrine*, they are busily firing people who are saying exactly what *Questions on Doctrine* said and that is your disparity. If you are going to put into print what you believe—live by it! If you are not willing to live by it, get out and let somebody else who will live by it do the job. But don't stay in there

⁴ Kenneth R. Samples, "From Controversy to Crisis: An Updated Assessment of Seventh-day Adventism," *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1988, 9.

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and talk out of both sides of your mouth and say to the evangelicals, 'This is what we believe,' and to everybody else, 'This is what we practice.' That doesn't work. ...

It's been conflict since 1956, against evangelicals who claimed the Adventists were cultists—and they are not—although some Adventists come pretty close to it when they get into certain areas of theology, and between those who maintain that Adventism is an evangelical denomination. ...

They confess the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, his sinless nature, his vicarious death, his bodily resurrection and ascension, his office of High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, his personal second advent to judge the world, salvation by grace, and justification by faith—depending to a large extent, of course, on which school of Adventists you happen to run into ... They cannot be classified as a non-Christian cult ... but, that does not mean that a Seventh-day Adventist cannot be cultic. ... It just depends upon to whom you are talking; and it can get very, very cultic.⁵

The modern stance of Seventh-day Adventism is that the majority, about 66 percent, identify with evangelical theology, while still holding the distinctive persuasions of the denomination.⁶ These are the evangelical Adventists. The traditional Adventists are the minority, but they are often in positions of control, which confuses Christians and outsiders who fail to investigate the entire organization (often committing a composition fallacy that one part represents the whole). Another minor segment takes a more liberal theological position akin to Protestant liberals.~

This section on Seventh-day Adventism is an attempt to present for consideration facts that are little known in many areas and often distorted in others. It is an effort to examine, commend, and criticize where necessary the theological structure of the Adventist denomination, and is submitted with a prayerful hope that honest investigation, even if it does not agree with our preconceived notions, is to be encouraged and profited from, under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

⁵ Walter R. Martin and Desmond Ford, "SDA in Riverside, CA Part 1, February 1989, audio recording, at 14:55–44:20, Waltermartin.com.

⁶ Larry Christoffel, "Evangelical Adventism—Questions on Doctrine's Legacy," accessed May 1, 2018, http://god.andrews.edu/docs/09_larry_christoffel.doc. In this paper, Mr. Christoffel, took a survey of the Southeastern California (Adventist) Conference. See also http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:Cq9SnuqHsOgl:god.andrews.edu/docs/09_larry_christoffel.doc+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-b-1.

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The Historical Background of Seventh-day Adventism

Seventh-day Adventism sprang from the “Great Second Advent Awakening,” which shook the religious world just before the middle of the nineteenth century when a reemphasis on the second advent of Jesus Christ was rampant in Britain and on the continent of Europe. Before long, many of the Old World views of prophetic interpretation crossed the Atlantic and penetrated American theological circles.

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Based largely upon the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation, the theology of the Advent Movement was discussed in the newspapers as well as in theological journals. New Testament eschatology competed with stock market quotations for front-page space, and the “seventy weeks,” “twenty-three hundred days,” and “the abomination of desolation” (Daniel 8–9) were common subjects of conversation.

Following the chronology of Archbishop Ussher, and interpreting the 2,300 days of Daniel as 2,300 years, many Bible students of various denominations concluded that Christ would come back about the year 1843. Of this studious number was one William Miller, a Baptist minister and resident of Lower Hampton, New York. The Great Second Advent Awakening, which swept the United States in the 1840s, stemmed largely from the activities of this William Miller, who confidently taught in the year 1818 that in “about” twenty-five years, i.e., 1843, Jesus Christ would come again. As Miller himself put it, “I was thus brought in 1818 at the close of my two-year study of the Scriptures to the solemn conclusion that in about twenty-five years from that time all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.”⁷

Miller further wrote:

I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for his coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21st, 1843 and March 21st, 1844, according to the Jewish method of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all his saints with him; and that then he will reward every man as his work shall be.⁸

At length his associates set October 22, 1844, as the final date when Jesus Christ would return for His saints, visit judgment upon sin, and establish the kingdom of God upon earth.

One need only read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to realize that Miller was teaching in contradiction to the Word of God. Jesus said, “But of that day and hour knoweth no

⁷ Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington, DC: *Review and Herald*, 1944), 35.

⁸ William Miller, *Signs of the Time*, January 25, 1843.

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man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matthew 24:36; also 24:42, 44; 25:13).

The gospel of Mark also shows that dates cannot be set, for in verse 35 of chapter 13 our Lord stated, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh." And almost His last words to His disciples are a rebuke to those who set dates: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). Certainly this should have been deterrent enough for William Miller and his associates, but, sad to say, it was not.

Compare the two positions, Miller versus the Scriptures: God declared that no man would know the time; Miller stated that he did know the time. God said the times and seasons were within His own power; the Millerites declared that they had the prophetic key given to them. Jesus Christ stated, "No man knows the day or the hour," but the Millerites set the exact day (October 22, 1844). And history bears a bitter record of their terrible disappointment.

Lest anyone reading the various accounts of the rise of "Millerism" in the United States come to the conclusion that Miller and his followers were "crackpots" or "uneducated tools of Satan," the following facts should be known:⁹ The Great Advent Awakening movement that spanned the Atlantic from Europe was bolstered by a tremendous wave of contemporary biblical scholarship. Although Miller himself lacked academic theological training, actually scores of prophetic scholars in Europe and the United States had espoused Miller's views before he himself announced them. In reality, his was only one more voice proclaiming the 1843/1844 fulfillment of Daniel 8:14, or the 2,300-day period allegedly dating from 457 BC and ending AD 1843–1844.

William Miller was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on February 15, 1782, and while he was still a young child his family moved to Lower Hampton, New York, close to the Vermont state border. Miller was raised by a deeply religious mother, but despite her zeal for his conversion, Miller became a deist. Only after a soul-searching experience that culminated in his conversion did he begin his preparation for ministry in the Baptist church. A great many books have been written about William Miller and the Millerite movement, but to this writer's knowledge none of them proved Miller to be dishonest or deceptive in his prophetic interpretation of Scripture. Indeed, he enjoyed the reputation, among all who knew him, of being an honest, forthright Christian. One does not have to

⁹ The various charges to the effect that the Millerites were fanatics who waited on rooftops attired in white "ascension robes" anticipating the return of Christ, and further, that insanity swept the Millerite ranks in 1843 and 1844 in the wake of the "Great Disappointment" are purely mythological in character and have little basis in verifiable facts (see Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, 321–498).

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endorse the errors of Millerism, therefore, to respect the historical figure of William Miller. Regardless of his shortcomings, Miller was a deeply religious Christian who, had he had a more extensive understanding of the Scriptures, most probably would never have embarked upon his disastrous date-setting career.

Clearly it may be seen that although Miller popularized the 1843/1844 concept of Christ's coming again, he was by no means alone. If we condemn him, we must also condemn a large number of internationally known scholars who were among the most highly educated men of their day. Yet they, too, had a blind spot in prophetic interpretation and endorsed this fallacious system of date-setting. Regardless of the number of scholars who confirmed his errors, however, the fact remains that Miller and the Millerite movement operated contrary to the express injunctions of Scripture. Both Miller and his followers lived to reap the reward of their foolhardy quest and to suffer crushing humiliation, ridicule, and abject despair.

William Miller set the time for the return of the Lord between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, reckoning according to the Jewish calendar.¹⁰ As the first-named date approached, religious frenzy shook the Millerite world—the Lord was coming back!

Though the followers of Miller were zealous and sincere, stark disappointment awaited them as the Jewish year 1843 faded from time and the Lord did not come. When the dream closest to their hearts failed to materialize, they eagerly sought enlightenment from William Miller, who replied with characteristic honesty. Wrote Miller, in the very shadow of spiritual anguish:

Were I to live my life over again, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man I should have to do as I have done. Although opposers said it would not come, they produced no weighty arguments. It was evidently guess-work with them; and I then thought, and do now, that their denial was based more on an unwillingness for the Lord to come than on any arguments leading to such conclusion. I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the Day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful and not let that day come upon you unawares.¹¹

In the wake of this stunning declaration, the Millerites strove vainly to reconcile their interpretations of the prophetic Scriptures with the stark truth that Christ had not returned. With one last gasp, so to speak, Miller reluctantly endorsed “The Seventh-

¹⁰ Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, 169.

¹¹ Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston, Mass.: n.p., 1855), 256.

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Month Movement," or the belief that Christ would come on October 22, 1844, the tenth day of the seventh month according to the Karaite reckoning of the Jewish Sacred Calendar.¹² Once again the Millerites' hopes were lifted, and October 22, 1844 became the watchword for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The outcome can best be summed up in the words of Dr. Josiah Litch, a Millerite leader in Philadelphia who wrote on October 24: "It is a cloudy and dark day here—the sheep are scattered—the Lord has not come yet."¹³

From Litch's statement, it is easy to piece together the psychological framework of the Millerites in the wake of these two disappointments. They were a shattered and disillusioned people—Christ had not come to cleanse the "sanctuary" (the earth), to usher in judgment, and to bring the world into subjugation to the "everlasting gospel." Instead, the sky was cloudy and dark, and the historical horizons were black with the failure of the Millerite movement. There was, of course, terrible confusion, of which God, Scripture tells us, is not the author (1 Corinthians 14:33).

The final phase of the movement closed with the "Great Disappointment of 1844," but as the Millerites disbanded, there emerged other groups, such as the First-day Adventists. However, in our study we are concerned primarily with three segments that later fused to produce the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. William Miller, it should be noted, was *never* a Seventh-day Adventist and stated that he had "no confidence" in the "new theories" that emerged from the shambles of the Millerite movement. Dr. LeRoy Froom, professor of prophetic interpretation at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Takoma Park, Washington, D.C., in the fourth volume of his masterful series *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, succinctly states what Miller's position was:

Miller was outspokenly opposed to the various new theories that had developed following October 22, 1844, in an endeavor to explain the disappointment. He deplored the call that had been given to come out to the churches, and he never accepted the distinctive positions of the Sabbatarians. The doctrine of the unconscious sleep of the dead and the final destruction of the wicked was not, he maintained, part of the original Millerite position, but was introduced personally by George Storrs and Charles Fitch. He even came to deny the application of the parable in *The Midnight Cry* to the Seventh-month Movement and eventually went

¹² Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, 243.

¹³ Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, 256.

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so far as to declare unequivocally that the movement was not “a fulfillment of prophecy in any sense.”¹⁴

Aside from chronological speculation, therefore, the theology of William Miller differed from Seventh-day Adventist theology on three distinct points: He denied the Seventh-day Sabbath; the doctrine of the sleep of the soul; and the final, utter destruction of the wicked—all doctrines held by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Also, he never embraced the “sanctuary” and “investigative judgment” theories developed by Seventh-day Adventists. For William Miller the era of chronological speculation was over, and he died shortly after the fiasco, a broken and disillusioned man who was, nevertheless, honest and forthright when in error or when repudiating error. I believe he now enjoys the presence of the Lord whose appearing he so anxiously awaited.

In order to understand the background of Seventh-day Adventist history and theology, let us look at the three segments of Millerism, which eventually united to form the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Each of these groups held a distinctive doctrine. The group headed by Hiram Edson in western New York proclaimed the doctrine of the sanctuary “as embracing a special or final ministry of Christ in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly sanctuary,” thus giving new meaning to the message “The Hour of God’s Judgment Has Come.” The second group, headed by Joseph Bates, whose main following was in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, advocated the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath “as involved in the keeping of the commandments of God.” The third group, in Maine, emphasized the “Spirit of prophecy” or “the testimony of Jesus,” which they believed was to be made manifest in the “remnant” (Revelation 14:6–12; also Revelation 12:17; 19:10) or “the last segment of God’s church of the centuries.” Between the years 1844 and 1847 the thinking of these groups crystallized and was actively declared and promulgated in the writings of their respective leaders: Hiram Edson, O. R. L. Crosier, Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen G. White.

At this point in our historical analysis of Seventh-day Adventism, we believe it will be profitable to briefly review “The Great Disappointment of 1844” and its relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment. The entire superstructure of the Millerites’ prophetic interpretation was based upon their view of the book of Daniel, chapters eight and nine, with particular emphasis upon Daniel 8:14 and 9:24–27. The Millerites believed that the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel nine must date from the year 457 BC, which, as recent archaeological

¹⁴ From, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), 828–829.

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evidence confirms,¹⁵ was the exact date of the decree of King Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25). Tracing the seventy weeks of Daniel on the theory that, as the Hebrew indicated, it should be rendered “seventy weeks of years” or 490 years, the Millerites arrived at the date AD 33; that is, from 457 BC to AD 33. Since this date generally corresponds with Christ’s crucifixion, Millerites then linked it to Daniel 8:14— “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” — with the seventy weeks of years prophecy, and the 2,300 days became 2,300 years. Thus, if you subtract 490 years (adding, of course, AD 1 to 33), the figure arrived at is 1843. Many biblical scholars have historically shown that in Scripture a day frequently symbolizes a year; further, that the seventy weeks and 2,300 days of Daniel could have begun on the same date. And that date, according to the Millerites, was 457 BC. In *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*,¹⁶ Dr. LeRoy Froom shows that many expositors had embraced the same method of interpretation, which is no argument for accepting it, but a strong argument for the *right* of the Millerites to do so.

As we have seen, when the Millerite calculations failed, all appeared to be lost; but a singular event took place only three days later in a cornfield near Port Gibson, New York, which changed the face of Adventist history and brought about a reinterpretation of the eighth and ninth chapters of the book of Daniel, an interpretation that is a keystone in the arch of the Seventh-day Adventist view of prophecy.

On October 25, 1844, following the “Great Disappointment,” Hiram Edson, a devout Adventist and follower of William Miller, was wending his way homeward with his friend O. R. L. Crosier. In order to avoid the mocking gazes and taunts of their neighbors, they cut across a cornfield.

As they walked through the cornfield in deep silence and meditation, Hiram Edson stopped, became more deeply immersed in meditation, and then with upturned face indicative of a heartfelt prayer for spiritual light, he suddenly received a great spiritual “revelation.” In the words of Dr. Froom,

Suddenly there burst upon his mind the thought that there were *two* phases to Christ’s ministry in the heaven of heavens, just as in the earthly sanctuary of old. In his own words, an overwhelming conviction came over him “that instead of our high priest *coming out of* the most holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month at the end of the 2,300 days, he for the

¹⁵ Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1959).

¹⁶ Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vols. 1–4.

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first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary, and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth."¹⁷

In that instant, according to Seventh-day Adventist history, Hiram Edson found the reason why the Millerites had been disappointed. They had expected Christ to come to earth to cleanse the sanctuary, but the sanctuary was not the earth. It was located in heaven! Instead of coming to earth, therefore, Christ had passed from one "apartment" of the sanctuary into the other "apartment" to perform a closing work now known as the "investigative judgment." In the year 1846, this new interpretation of Daniel was convincingly put forth by O. R. L. Crosier,¹⁸ who outlined and defended Hiram Edson's concept in a lengthy article in a special number of *The Day Star*, a Millerite publication in Cincinnati, Ohio. F. D. Nichol in *The Midnight Cry* refers to "a fragment," which Edson wrote about his experience in the cornfield. But as Dr. Froom has pointed out, Edson himself really believed that Christ had passed from the "holy place" to the "most holy" place in the heavenly sanctuary. The Old Testament tabernacle was divided by a veil into two apartments, the holy place and the most holy place. In the most holy place was the Ark of the Covenant. Into this apartment the high priest went once a year to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat to make atonement for the sins of the people. In Christian theology, this blood symbolized prophetically the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, for the sins of all the world.

Transferring this Old Testament ceremonial concept to the New Testament, and making an extremely literalistic interpretation of the book of Hebrews, Edson and Crosier formulated the doctrines of "the heavenly sanctuary" and "investigative judgment." These concepts are now understood to mean that in 1844 Christ entered the "second phase" of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, and ever since has been reviewing the cases of believers to determine their worthiness for eternal life. Further, He will come forth from the "second apartment," or finish the "second phase" of His ministry in the sanctuary, to usher in judgment upon the world at His Great Second Advent. This, in essence, was the interpretation that shaped the later concepts of the "heavenly sanctuary" and the "investigative judgment" in Seventh-day Adventist theology. Thus, good Millerite-Adventists were justified in endorsing the work of William Miller. They even

¹⁷ *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, IV:881. An extremely literalistic concept that is refuted by Hebrews 9:12, 24 and Acts 1, which show that at His ascension Christ entered into the "holy places," not the "second apartment" of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. Seventh-day Adventists have redefined their teaching in terms of "phases."

¹⁸ Crosier later rejected this concept, though it was endorsed by Ellen G. White and other prominent Adventist leaders. (See D. M. Canright, *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*, 107.)

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maintained that God had allowed Miller to make mistakes for the greater blessing of the “little flock.” In her *Early Writings*, Ellen G. White made this assertion:

I have seen that the 1843 chart was directed by the hand of the Lord, and that it should not be altered; that the figures were as He wanted them; that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures, so that none could see it, until His hand was removed.¹⁹

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In this context, White was distinctly referring to Fitch’s prophetic chart, utilized by the Millerites, which led them to the year 1843 instead of the date that she considered to be correct—October 22, 1844.

F. D. Nichol, in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*,²⁰ attempts to explain White’s statement in the light of Acts 24, Mark 16, Exodus 8:15, and Exodus 10. Of course, any are at liberty to accept his interpretation of the problem, which I do not. The fact remains, however, that the Millerites erred in their prophetic, chronological interpretation of the book of Daniel, and only the concept of Hiram Edson in the cornfield and the explanatory writings of O. R. L. Crosier, buttressed by the “revelations” of Ellen G. White, saved the day.

Although I do not accept White’s explanation or the interpretations of Edson, Crosier, Froom, or Nichol, I would be at a loss to account for the growth and development of Seventh-day Adventism apart from the psychological framework of the “Great Disappointment of 1844.” Therefore, I have carefully reviewed the doctrines that evolved from the Edson-Crosier-White pronouncements. The psychological factor is very important in Seventh-day Adventist history.

The second of the three Millerite-Adventist groups mentioned is also of great historical import. In Fairhaven, Massachusetts, following the “Great Disappointment of 1844,” one Joseph Bates, a retired sea captain, issued a forty-eight-page pamphlet entitled *The Seventh-day Sabbath, A Perpetual Sign* (self-published, 1846). In it he argued for the Sabbath as a divine institution ordained in Eden, prefigured in Creation, and buttressed at Mount Sinai. Some three years later Bates wrote a second pamphlet entitled *A Seal of the Living God* (self-published, 1849), based largely upon Revelation 14:9–12. Bates’ Sabbatarianism exerted a great influence upon what later became the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

In Volume 4 of *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (957–958), Dr. Froom sums it up:

¹⁹ White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, n.d.), 74.

²⁰ Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, n.d.), 332–334.

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This became henceforth a characteristic and separating feature of Sabbatarian Adventist preaching. Bates here held that the message of Revelation 14 is the foundation of the full Advent message “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of His judgment is come.” This, he maintained, began to be fulfilled in the preaching of the Millerite movement. And the second angel’s message on the fall of Babylon, with its climax in the call, “Come out of her, my people,” was likewise initially sounded in 1844–1848. ... They must not stop with the first two messages. There is a third, inseparable in the series, to be received and obeyed—namely, full obedience to God’s holy commandments, including the observance of the Seventh day as a Sabbath. But that obedience is by faith. The Sabbath was next set forth as the “seal of God” as based on the sealing work of Revelation 7. In January 8, 1849, Bates issued his tract “A Seal of the Living God.” *A Seal of the Living God*. From the fact of John’s declaration that the number of sealed was 144,000, Bates drew the conclusion that the “remnant” who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ would number 144,000. So, to the concept of Christ’s entering the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, 1844, for the final work of judgment and the receiving of His kingdom, was added the Sabbath, as involved in the third of this commissioned series of special “latter-day” messages. This concept of the “seal” was likewise built into the message of the Sabbath, as an added prophetic element. And this thought was similarly attested by Ellen White who wrote: “This seal is the Sabbath,” and described the “most holy place” in which was the ark (Revelation 11:19), containing the Ten Commandments, with a halo of light surrounding the fourth. Thus the Sabbath and the sanctuary became inseparably tied together.

The third group, which fused with the other two to form the Seventh-day Adventist Church, emphasized “the Spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). This body of former Millerites accepted the interpretations of one Ellen G. Harmon of Portland, Maine. Ellen Harmon, later Mrs. James White, was recognized by this group as the possessor of the “Spirit of prophecy,” a restoration of the spiritual gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:10) or counsel to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. White had numerous visions that confirmed many Adventist doctrines. When the Edson, Crosier, Bates, and White adherents joined forces, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination was launched.

~Since the 1960s, the evangelical branch of Adventism seems to downplay White’s role as a “prophet,” describing her as “a gifted author, speaker, and administrator, who ... enjoyed God’s special guidance.”²¹ In any case, the church today clearly affirms that any post-biblical prophet’s words must be tested by the Bible: “The Scriptures retain authority

²¹ Seventh-day Adventist official website, <http://www.adventist.org>.

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even over the gifts that come from the Holy Spirit, including guidance through the gift of prophecy or speaking in tongues."²² ~

Although the name "Seventh-day Adventist" for the denomination was not officially assumed until 1860 at a conference held in Battle Creek, Michigan, nevertheless, Seventh-day Adventism had been launched. In 1855, Adventist headquarters were established in Battle Creek and remained there until 1905, when they were transferred to Takoma Park, a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C.

The three distinctive doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism—the Sabbath, the Sanctuary, and the "Spirit of prophecy"—will be discussed later. The Adventists had a definite theological platform, which for many years remained almost constant. In recent years, however, there has been a definite movement toward a more explicit declaration of belief in the principles of the Christian faith and the tenets of Christian theology. In short, "clarification" and "redefinition" have characterized recent Seventh-day Adventist theological activities.

~The Seventh-day Adventist church today claims around 19.5 million members worldwide in more than 200 countries. It is growing especially rapidly in Third World countries. Seventh-day Adventists are headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, but also operate twelve international administrative offices and thirteen Agencies of the General Conference in the United States and the Philippines. Known for their education, they have the "world's second largest integrated network of schools," with 1.8 million students, and they have the "largest Protestant integrated network of hospitals and clinics," numbering 31,772 beds/units. In 2011, "the Seventh day Adventist Church was recognized as the fastest-growing Christian denomination in North America."²³~

We cannot hope to cover the entire scope of Seventh-day Adventism's historical development in this brief résumé; but we see that from meager beginnings in the wake of the "Great Disappointment of 1844" and the collapse of the Millerite movement, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has pressed forward and expanded until today it constitutes an important, albeit controversial, segment of American Protestantism.

Although this is but a background sketch, the reader can readily see that in Seventh-day Adventism, religious historians have an interesting subject for study, a subject from which many unusual theological speculations have emerged and continue to emerge.

²² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Twenty-Seven Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 13.

²³ Detailed statistical information available at the Seventh-day Adventist official website, www.adventist.org.

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Psychological Factors

One of the principal problems in understanding the Seventh-day Adventist movement is discovering the psychological motivation and basis of this thriving denomination of zealots.

I. Early Handicaps

From the beginning, the Adventists were regarded with grave suspicion by the great majority of evangelical Christians, principally because the Seventh-day Adventists were pre-millennial in their theology. That is, they believed that Christ would come before the millennium and saw themselves squarely in opposition to the predominant post-millennial and a-millennial schools of thought of that era. The "Great Disappointment of 1844" and the collapse of the Millerite movement naturally brought pre-millennialism into disrepute. Certain authors of the time considered pre-millenarians "peculiar," even to the point of condemning pre-millennialism outright, and dubbed as "Adventist" all who held that view of eschatology. This is especially interesting when we consider that pre-millennialism is an accepted school of thought in eschatology today and that those who hold post-millennial and a-millennial views are considered by the pre-millenarians to be peculiar.

Thus the Adventists started out with two great psychological handicaps: They had incurred disapproval of the group or the mainstream of Christianity, and the Millerites from which they sprang had been publicly humiliated by the failure of their chronological calculations. These two factors and the constant jeering by opposing schools of eschatology united the Seventh-day Adventists into a closely knit group, habitually on the defensive and suspicious of the motives and intentions of other Christians.

Moreover, the Adventists were drawn together by the "special truths" of the Advent message. They were convinced that they had a proclamation for the world—a great "last-day message." Later we shall describe how this attitude widened the chasm between Adventists and Christians of other denominations. It is sufficient here to note that the Adventists considered themselves a special "remnant people" ordained by God to revive certain neglected truths of the Christian message. Filled with burning zeal to fulfill this mission, they laid themselves open to serious misunderstanding by Christians of other denominations who did not agree with them about the proper day of worship, the state of the dead, and investigative judgment.

Engaged in open conflict with Christians of virtually all denominations, the Adventists retreated into an "exclusivistic shell," despising what they termed "certain antinomian tendencies in contemporary Christian theology." They laid strong emphasis upon man's

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responsibility to the moral law of God, which eventually brought upon them the label “Galatianists” or “legalists.” Now, as we shall see, there can be little doubt that there was and still is legalism in Adventism, as in some other Christian churches; but when we consider these early psychological factors, certain of which still pertain today, their reactions are understandable, though hardly defensible.

Of course, the aforementioned “neglected” truths made few friends for the Adventists with Christians of other denominations, mainly because these truths were frequently presented in such manner as to arouse opposition instead of inviting investigation. Seventh-day Adventism has woefully demonstrated many times the old but true adage, “Not what we say but how we say it makes or breaks a case.”

II. Identity Concealed

In his book *Answers to Objections*, F. D. Nichol demonstrates how the psychological defense that Adventists erected in their early days has carried over into modern times. Nichol quotes the charge:

When Seventh-day Adventist ministers go into a community to hold a series of lectures, they conceal, at first, their denominational connection. They thus hope to draw into their audience people who would never have come if they knew that Seventh-day Adventists were conducting the meetings. This is a form of deception. There is something the matter with a religious body that is afraid to identify itself as soon as it begins to carry on any activity in a community.²⁴

Nichol answers:

Now, it is a fact that during most of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the very word “Adventist” has conveyed to the minds of most people a picture of a deluded band of fanatics sitting on housetops in ascension robes, awaiting the opening of the heavens. This story of ascension robes has become a part of American folklore and has been embalmed in impressive encyclopedias. And the ascension robe story is only part of the fanciful picture that has come into the minds of many when they have heard the word “Adventist.”

The ascension robes story is a myth, and 99 percent of related stories are likewise myths—as has now been proved—but that has not prevented people from believing them. The net result has been that many people have seen Seventh-day Adventists only through the

²⁴ F. D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 420–422.

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distorting mists of slanderous myths. This is nothing new in religious history; witness, for example, the early history of the Quakers and the Baptists.

It should not be difficult, therefore, for any reasonable person to see why Adventist ministers through the past years have sought first to cause people to see them simply as Christian preachers before announcing their Adventist connection. After all, we seek to be first, and before all else, Christian preachers of righteousness. Then we hope to build on the timely messages from Bible prophecy that may be described in the words of the Apostle Peter as “present truth” for these last days of earth’s history.

It has undoubtedly been true in years past that Adventists could not have gotten a crowd out to hear them, in certain cities at least, if they had revealed their identity at the outset. But we think that proves, not the weakness of the Adventist case, but the strength of distorted ideas founded on fanciful myths. The other side of the picture is that many people, after they have attended Adventist meetings for a time, frankly admit that they have changed their ideas about us and are glad that they first came to the meetings not knowing who was conducting them.

In more recent years our activities have become so much better known that in many places the former distorted picture has been largely corrected. Accordingly, we are increasingly following the plan of announcing at the outset the Adventist sponsorship of the public meetings. That is what we like to do, and what we hope ere long to be able to do everywhere. We are not ashamed of our Adventism, far from it. ... No, we don’t want to boast, we simply want to proclaim to the world a message that we earnestly believe should be given at this time. And if, in order to secure an initial hearing, we must at first conceal the name, we do so for a brief period only with a view to a clear-cut announcement of our Adventist connections a little later in the meetings. Then those who have been coming may decline to come further, if they desire. They generally decide to stay!

Unhappily, as the literature of many objectors to Adventism reveals, it is *they* who have often been most active in spreading the distorting myths regarding us. And then they are wont to add, as though to prove conclusively their case against us, that we sometimes fail to reveal our Adventist connection at the outset of a series of evangelistic lectures! If they will help us to clear away completely the slanderous myths that folklore has often thrown around the name “Adventist,” we will be most happy to preface every one of our public meetings with the announcement of its Adventist sponsorship! In the meantime we shall, in such instances and areas as the situation necessitates, follow the precedent set by our Lord’s instruction to His disciples as regards the time of disclosing our name.

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Thus we see that some Adventist leaders, at least, maintain the premise that everyone's prejudice against them is based on myths and folklore, and on the fact that they deliberately disguise themselves until they can obtain a hearing and demonstrate that they are Christians. These practices have given rise to the charge of proselytizing and it is not without foundation. In general, however, Nichol makes some very good points, though inadvertently he reveals only too clearly that he and many Adventists have been reared in this unhealthy climate of distrust, prejudice, and suspicion.

Nichol declares:

If they will help us to clear away the completely slanderous myths which folklore has often thrown around the name Adventist, we will be most happy to preface every one of our public meetings with the announcement of its Adventist sponsorship!²⁵

The only difficulty with Nichol's statement about identifying themselves is that the burden of proof lies not upon the other denominations, but upon the Adventists themselves. By openly saying who they are, they can refute these charges of deception and proselytizing.

On page 420, Nichol makes the mistake of using passages in the gospel of Matthew (8:4; 9:30; 16:20), where Christ enjoined secrecy, to prove that Adventists are only following Him when they conceal their identity, and he unfortunately tries to establish that such a behavior pattern on the part of Adventists is "honorable."²⁶ Says Nichol:

We have yet to hear any devout Christian expressing misgivings and doubts about the ministry of Christ or declaring that He was ashamed or afraid because He concealed His identity for a time. Evidently, then, this much at least may be established at the outset as being proved by these texts: Concealing one's identity is not an insult or proof that one is either ashamed or afraid. There may be honorable and altogether reasonable grounds for such concealment.²⁷

Although Nichol's argument appears plausible, the cases are not parallel, for over and against the incidents that he cites, the Lord Jesus did many miracles in public and taught openly in the Temple as He himself declared before Caiaphas (John 18:20). To compare the motives of Adventists with the motives of the Lord Jesus Christ is just a bit more than I am willing to concede.

²⁵ Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 420–422.

²⁶ Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 420.

²⁷ Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 420.

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True, there is much misinformation about Adventist history and theology, but not infrequently it can be traced to unfortunate statements in their own official publications. Although other denominations are likewise guilty, Adventists have largely been outside the mainstream of Christian fellowship and so are in an unenviable position. They must go the “second mile” in this respect.

It is evident, then, that because of the opposition and abuse suffered in their early days, and also because of the “special truths” of the Advent message and emphasis upon certain areas of theology, the Adventists have been at a distinct psychological disadvantage and so have tended to band together against other churches. Other denominations, of course, have encouraged this recluse-like behavior by endless repetition of some of the Millerite myths. These factors, therefore, must be soberly evaluated if we are to understand Seventh-day Adventism.

Adventist Theology and Classical Orthodoxy

For many years Seventh-day Adventists have been handicapped by the lack of a comprehensive volume that adequately defines their doctrinal position. Many publications clearly set forth certain aspects of Adventism, particularly the writings of F. D. Nichol, LeRoy Froom, and Ellen G. White, whose role is that of inspired commentator and “messenger” to the Adventist denomination.

Except for the brief statement of fundamentals in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, the average Adventist has been somewhat at a loss to explain conflicting theological opinions within his denomination, and even expressions in the writings of Ellen G. White were in certain contexts so ambiguous as to frustrate even the most devout believer. As a result of this, in 1957 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists released the first definitive and comprehensive explanation of their faith, an authoritative volume entitled *Questions on Doctrine*.

This book truthfully presents the theology and doctrine that the leaders of Seventh-day Adventism affirm they have always held. Members of other denominations will find it a reliable source to consult when seeking to understand what the Adventists themselves describe as “the position of our denomination in the area of church doctrine and prophetic interpretation.”²⁸

There can be no doubt of the fact that there are conflicting statements in Adventist publications and diverse opinions about certain areas of Adventist theology and interpretation, some of which is quite the opposite of classical orthodox Christianity; but

²⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, 8.

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this situation is not peculiar to the Adventist since all Christian denominations have various “wings,” in most instances quite vocal, which are a source of constant embarrassment because they represent their own particular interpretations of the denomination’s theology as the viewpoint of the denomination itself.

It is, therefore, unfair to quote any one Adventist writer or a group of writers as representing “the position of our denomination in the area of church doctrine and prophetic interpretation,” even though the writings of such persons may in a large area qualify as Adventist theology. One must consult in good faith what the denomination itself represents as its theology and assume that the Seventh-day Adventist theologians know better than non-Adventists the implications and conclusions that they are willing to admit as representative of their church’s theology.

This section is divided into several parts, each of which contains statements of the official Adventist position of particular aspects of theology, and is thoroughly documented from the primary source material provided in *Questions on Doctrine*. It is hoped that the reader will weigh carefully the declarations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as represented by its General Conference, which alone is empowered to speak for the denomination. They have asserted initially, and reaffirmed currently, the authoritative force of *Questions on Doctrine* as accurately representative of Adventist doctrine. Until such time as there is clear, unequivocal, and equally authoritative evidence to the contrary, we must let the doctrine revealed in this book stand as Adventist doctrine. These doctrinal points we shall present and biblically evaluate below.

It is unnecessary to document at great length the fact that Seventh-day Adventism adheres tenaciously to the foundational doctrines of Christian theology as these have been held by the Christian church throughout the centuries. Dr. Anthony Hoekema, who believes that Seventh-day Adventism is a non-Christian cult, makes this interesting admission, and since Dr. Hoekema is no friend of Adventism, his testimony on this point could hardly be called prejudiced:

I am of the conviction that Seventh-day Adventism is a cult and not an evangelical denomination. ... It is recognized with gratitude that there are certain soundly scriptural emphases in the teaching of Seventh-day Adventism. We are thankful for the Adventists’ affirmation of the infallibility of the Bible, of the Trinity, and of the full deity of Jesus Christ. We gratefully acknowledge their teachings on creation and providence, on the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, on the

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absolute necessity for regeneration, on sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and on Christ's literal return.²⁹

It is puzzling to me, as a student of non-Christian cult systems, how any group can hold the above doctrines in their proper biblical context, which Dr. Hoekema admits the Adventists do, and still be a non-Christian cult. However, we shall deal with this aspect of the critics of Adventism at the end of the chapter; therefore, suffice it to say that the Adventists do have a clean bill of health where the major doctrines of Christian theology are involved.

Lest there be any doubt on the subject, the following quotations taken from *Questions on Doctrine* are still upheld by the Seventh-day Adventist hierarchy as authoritative, and forthrightly declare the Seventh-day Adventist position in relation to historical Christianity as well as those areas where Adventism differs from the orthodox Christian position.



I. Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures

1. Seventh-day Adventists believe that “all Scripture,” both Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelation, was “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), and constitutes the very Word of God—the truth that “liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23). We recognize the Bible as the ultimate and final authority on what is truth (26).
2. Seventh-day Adventists hold the Protestant position that the Bible and the Bible only is the sole rule of faith and practice for Christians. We believe that all theological beliefs must be measured by the living Word, judged by its truth, and whatsoever is unable to pass this test, or is found to be out of harmony with its message, is to be rejected (28).
3. We believe in the authority, veracity, reliability, and truth of the Holy Scriptures. The same union of the divine and the human that is manifested in Christ, exists in

²⁹ Anthony Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 389, 403.

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the Bible. Its truths, revealed, are “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), yet are couched in the words of men (27–28).

II. The Nature of Christ

1. Jesus Christ is very God, and He has existed with the Father from all eternity (22).
2. Christ, the Word of God, became incarnate through the miraculous conception and the Virgin Birth; and He lived an absolutely sinless life here on earth (22).
3. Christ is called the Second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God. *He began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam's failure* (650).
4. In taking upon himself man's nature in its fallen condition, *Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed. ... He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. And yet He “knew no sin.” He was the Lamb “without blemish and without spot.” ... We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ]* (651).
5. *In His human nature He maintained the purity of His divine character. ... He was unsullied by corruption, a stranger to sin. ... He was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points like as we are* (658–659).
6. *He was perfect, and undefiled by sin. He was without spot or blemish. ... Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, received no pollution* (660).

III. The Atonement

1. Those who teach that a completed atonement was made on the cross view the term in its popular theological sense, but really what is meant by them is that on Calvary, the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Christ was offered for our salvation. With this concept all true Christians readily and heartily agree. “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Those who view this aspect of the work of Christ as a completed atonement, apply this term only to what Christ accomplished on the cross. They do not include in their definition the application of the benefits of the atonement made on the cross, to the individual sinner (342).

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2. Seventh-day Adventists do not believe that Christ made but partial or incomplete sacrificial atonement on the cross (349).
3. Most decidedly the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus our Lord was offered and completed on the cross of Calvary. This was done for all mankind, for “he is the propitiation ... for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2) ... This sacrificial work will actually benefit human hearts only as we surrender our lives to God and experience the miracle of the new birth. In this experience, Jesus, our high priest *applies to us the benefits* of His atoning sacrifice. Our sins are forgiven, we become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and the peace of God dwells in our hearts (350).
4. When, therefore, one hears an Adventist say, or reads in Adventist literature—even in the writings of Ellen G. White—that Christ is making atonement now, it should be understood that we mean simply that Christ is now [*making application of the benefits of the sacrificial atonement He made on the cross*]; that He is making it efficacious for us individually, according to our needs and requests. Mrs. White herself, as far back as 1857, clearly explained what she meant when she wrote of Christ’s making atonement for us in His ministry:

The great Sacrifice had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where Jesus had entered by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples the benefits of His atonement (354–355).

5. When the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. “It is enough,” He said, “the *Atonement is complete*” (663).

IV. The Resurrection

1. Jesus Christ arose literally and bodily from the grave. “He ascended literally and bodily into heaven.” He now serves as our advocate in priestly ministry and mediation before the Father (22).
2. There shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. The resurrection of the just will take place at the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the unjust will take place a thousand years later, at the close of the millennium (John 5:28–29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 20:5–10) (14).

V. The Second Coming

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1. [Jesus Christ] will return in a premillennial, personal, imminent second advent (22).
2. As our denominational name indicates, the second coming of Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Adventist faith. We give it such prominence in our beliefs because it occupies a pivotal place in Holy Scripture, not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old (449).
3. Jesus will assuredly come the second time ... [His] second advent will be visible, audible, and personal. ... Seventh-day Adventists believe on the evidence of Scripture that there will be one visible, personal, glorious second coming of Christ (451–452, 459).

VI. The Plan of Salvation

1. The vicarious, atoning death of Jesus Christ, once for all, is all-sufficient for the redemption of a lost race. ... Man was created sinless, but by his subsequent fall entered a state of alienation and depravity. ... Salvation through Christ is by grace alone, and through faith in His blood. ... Entrance upon the new life in Christ is by regeneration, or the new birth. ... Man is justified by faith ... sanctified by the indwelling Christ through the Holy Spirit (22–23).
2. Every person in order to obtain salvation must experience the new birth. That this comprises an entire transformation of life and character by the recreative power of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Matthew 18:3; Acts 2:37–39) (12).
3. The law of the Ten Commandments points out sin, the penalty of which is death. The law cannot save the transgressor from his sin, nor impart power to keep him from sinning. In infinite love and mercy, God provides a way whereby this may be done. He furnishes a substitute, even Christ the Righteous One, to die in man's stead, making "him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). That one is justified, not by obedience to the law, but by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. By accepting Christ, man is reconciled to God, justified by His blood for the sins of the past, and saved from the power of sin by His indwelling life (12–13).
4. One who truly understands and accepts the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can assuredly know that he is born again, and that he is fully accepted by the Lord. He has in his soul the assurance of present salvation, and need be in no uncertainty whatsoever. In fact, he may know this so fully that he

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can truly “rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 4:4), and in “the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:5) (105).

5. Nothing we can ever do will merit the favor of God—Salvation is of grace. It is grace that “bringeth salvation” (Titus 2:11). It is “through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved” (Acts 15:11). We are not saved by “works” (Romans 4:6; Ephesians 2:9; 2 Timothy 1:9), even though they be good works. ... Neither can we be saved by “law” (Romans 8:3), nor by the “deeds” or the “works” of the law (Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:2, 5, 10). ... The law of God was never designed to save men. It is a looking glass, in which, when we gaze, we see our sinfulness. That is as far as the law of God can go with a sinful man. It can reveal his sin, but is powerless to remove it or to save him from its guilt and penalty and power (108–109).

VII. The Spiritual Nature of Man

1. Some have maintained that man was created mortal, so far as his body was concerned, but that he possessed an immortal entity called either a “soul” or a “spirit.” Others have felt equally certain that man was not in any sense created immortal. They have been convinced that man was not in possession of an ethereal soul, or spirit, which survived death as a conscious entity, apart from the body. ... We as Adventists believe that, in general, the Scriptures teach that the soul of man represents the whole man, and not a particular part independent of the other component parts of man’s nature; and further, that the soul cannot exist apart from the body, for a man is a unit (511, 515).
2. We, as Adventists, have reached the definite conclusion that man rests in the tomb until the resurrection morning. Then, at the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4–5), the resurrection of the just (Acts 24:15), the righteous come forth immortalized, at the call of Christ the Life-giver. And they then enter into life everlasting, in their eternal home in the kingdom of glory. Such is our understanding (520).

VIII. Punishment of the Wicked

1. In the expression “eternal punishment,” just as in “eternal redemption” and “eternal judgment,” the Bible is referring to all eternity—not as of *process*, but as of result. It is not an endless process of punishment, “but an effectual punishment, which will be final and forever” (540).
2. We reject the doctrine of eternal torment for the following major reasons: (1) Because everlasting life is a gift of God (Romans 6:23). The wicked do not

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possess this—they “shall not see life” (John 3:36); “no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). (2) Because eternal torment would perpetuate and immortalize sin, suffering, and woe, and contradict, we believe, divine revelation, which envisions the time when these things shall be no more (Revelation 21:4). (3) Because it seems to us to provide a plague spot in the universe of God throughout eternity, and would seem to indicate that it is impossible for God himself ever to abolish it. (4) Because in our thinking, it would detract from the attribute of love as seen in the character of God, and postulates the concept of a wrath which is never appeased. (5) Because the Scriptures teach that the atoning work of Christ is to “put away sin” (Hebrews 9:26)—first from the individual, and ultimately from the universe. The full fruition of Christ’s sacrificial, atoning work will be seen not only in a redeemed people but in a restored heaven and earth (Ephesians 1:13–14) (543).

IX. The Sanctuary and the Investigative Judgment

1. *Does your teaching of the sanctuary service mean that the work of Christ on Calvary was not an all-sufficient, complete, once-for-all sacrifice—a sacrifice that obtains for us eternal redemption? Or was something subsequently necessary to make the sacrificial work of Christ effective for the salvation of man?*

To the first part of the question our answer is an unequivocal *No*. The death of Christ on Calvary’s cross provides the only sacrifice by which man can be saved. ... This “one sacrifice” (Hebrews 10:12) or “one offering” of Christ was “forever” (v. 14), and wrought “eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12) for man. The sacrifice was completely efficacious. It provided complete atonement for all mankind, and will never be repeated, for it was all-sufficient and covered the needs of every soul (356–357).

2. The expression “once” or “once for all,” in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, is deeply significant. ... “He died to sin, *once for all*” (Romans 6:10); “offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10). He did this not by “the blood of goats and calves” but by “his own blood” he entered *once for all* into the holy place (or “holies”), “thus securing an eternal redemption” for us (Hebrews 9:12, RSV).

The Greek word here translated “holy place” is *hagia*, and is in the plural form. A correct translation would be “the holies,” or “holy places,” as in Hebrews 9:24. This entrance, Scripture teaches, occurred at His ascension to glory (Acts 1), having already finished His sacrificial work on the cross. The word translated “obtained,” in the Greek is from *heurisko*, and is rendered “found,” “procured,” “gained,” or in the RSV, “secured” (380–381).

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3. Jesus our surety entered the "holy places," and appeared in the presence of God for us. But it was not with the hope of obtaining something for us at that time, or at some future time. No! *He had already obtained it for us on the cross.* And now as our high priest He ministers the virtue of His atoning sacrifice to us (381).
4. The time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, synchronizing with the period of the proclamation of the message of Revelation 14, is a time of investigative judgment; first, with reference to the dead, and second, with reference to the living. This investigative judgment determines who of the myriad sleeping in the dust of the earth are worthy of a part in the first resurrection, and who of its living multitudes are worthy of translation (1 Peter 4:17–18; Daniel 7:9–10; Revelation 14:6–7; Luke 20:35) (15).
5. The great judgment scene of heaven will clearly reveal those who have been growing in grace and developing Christlike characters. Some who have professed to be God's people, but who have disregarded His counsel, will in amazement say to the Lord, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" His reply to such will be brief but emphatic: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22–23) (417).
6. In view of the principles here set forth, it seems to us abundantly clear that the acceptance of Christ at conversion does not seal a person's destiny. His life record after conversion is also important. A man may go back on his repentance, or by careless inattention let slip the very life he has espoused. Nor can it be said that a man's record is closed when he comes to the end of his days. He is responsible for his influence during life, and is just as surely responsible for his evil influence after he is dead (420).
7. It is our understanding that Christ, as High Priest, concludes His intercessory ministry in heaven in a work of judgment. He begins His great work of judgment in the investigative phase. At the conclusion of the investigation, the sentence of judgment is pronounced. Then as judge, Christ descends to *execute* or carry into effect that sentence. ... When God's final sentence of judgment is consummated, the redeemed will be singing the song of Moses and the Lamb (422).
8. The blotting of names out of the book of life is, we believe, a work of the investigative judgment. A complete and thorough check of all the candidates for eternal life will need to be completed before Christ comes in the clouds of heaven, for when He appears, the decisions for life and death are already made. The dead in Christ are called to life, and the living followers of Christ are translated

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(1 Thessalonians 4:15–17)—the entire citizenry of the everlasting kingdom. There's no time subsequent to the second advent for such decisions (438–439).

X. The Scapegoat Teaching

1. Two goats were obviously required, and used, on the Day of Atonement, because there is a twofold responsibility for sin—first, my responsibility as the perpetrator, agent, or medium; and second, Satan's responsibility as the instigator, or tempter, in whose heart sin was first conceived.

Now, concerning my sin, Christ died for my sins (Romans 5:8). ... He assumed my responsibilities, and His blood alone cleanses me from all sin. (1 John 1:7) The atonement for my sin is made solely by the shed blood of Christ.

And concerning Satan's sin and his responsibility as instigator and tempter, no salvation is provided for him. He must be punished for his responsibility. There is no savior, or substitute, to bear his punishment. He must himself "atone" for his sin in causing men to transgress, in the same way that a master criminal suffers on the gallows or in the electric chair for his responsibility in the crimes that he has caused others to commit. It is in this sense only that we can understand the words of Leviticus 16:10 concerning the scapegoat, "To make an atonement with him."

Under criminal law, the instigator, or mastermind, may be punished more severely than his agents. ... Satan is the responsible mastermind in the great crime of sin, and his responsibility will return upon his own head. The crushing weight of his responsibility in the sins of the whole world—of the wicked as well as the righteous—must be rolled back upon him. Simple justice demands that while Christ suffers for my guilt, Satan must also be punished as the instigator of sin (397–399).

2. Satan makes no atonement for our sins. But Satan will ultimately have to bear the retributive punishment for his responsibility in the sins of all men, both righteous and wicked ... Seventh-day Adventists, therefore, repudiate *en toto* any idea, suggestions, or implication that Satan is in any sense or degree our sin bearer. The thought is abhorrent to us, and appallingly sacrilegious. Such a concept is a dreadful disparagement of the efficacy of Christ and His salvation, and vitiates the whole glorious provision of salvation solely through our Savior.

Satan's death, a thousand times over could never make him a savior in any sense whatsoever. He is the arch sinner of the universe, the author and instigator of sin. ... Only Christ, the Creator, the one and only God-man, could make a

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substitutionary atonement for men's transgressions. And this Christ did completely, perfectly, and once for all, on Golgotha (400).

XI. The Sabbath and the Mark of the Beast

1. We believe that the Sabbath was instituted in Eden before sin entered, that it was honored of God, set apart by divine appointment, and given to mankind as a perpetual memorial of a finished creation. It was based upon the fact that God himself had rested from His work of creation, had blessed His Sabbath, or rest day, and had sanctified it, or set it apart for man (Genesis 2:1–3; Mark 2:27) (149).
2. We believe that the restoration of the Sabbath is indicated in the Bible prophecy of Revelation 14:9–12. Sincerely believing this, we regard the observance of the Sabbath as a test of our loyalty to Christ as Creator and Redeemer.

Seventh-day Adventists do not rely upon their Sabbath-keeping as a *means* of salvation or of winning merit before God. We are saved by grace alone. Hence our Sabbath observance, as also our loyalty to every other command of God, is an expression of our love for our Creator and Redeemer.

We are saved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ received as a gift of grace, and grace alone. Our Lord's sacrifice on Calvary is mankind's only hope. But having been saved, we rejoice that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in the experience of the Christian "who walks not after the flesh but after the spirit," and who by the grace of God lives in harmony with the revealed will of God (153, 190).

3. Do Seventh-day Adventists teach in their authorized literature that those who worship on Sunday and repudiate in its entirety the Seventh-day Adventist teaching as a consequence have the mark of apostasy, or "the mark of the beast"? Does not Mrs. White teach that those who now keep Sunday already have the mark of the beast?

Our doctrinal positions are based upon the Bible, and not upon Mrs. White's writings. But since her name has been introduced into the question, an explicit statement from her pen should set the record straight. The following was penned by her in 1899: "No one has yet received the mark of the beast. Testing time has not yet come. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion. *None are condemned until they have had the light and seen the obligation of the fourth commandment.* But when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit Sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men against

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the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast" (183).

4. To your inquiry, then, as to whether Mrs. White maintained that all those who do not see and observe the seventh day as the Sabbath now have the "mark of apostasy," the answer is definitely No (184).
5. We hold the firm conviction that millions of devout Christians of all faiths throughout all past centuries, as well as those today who are sincerely trusting in Christ their Savior for salvation and are following Him according to their best light, are unquestionably saved (184).

XII. The Question of Unclean Foods

1. It is true we refrain from eating certain articles ... but *not because* the law of Moses had any binding claims upon us. Far from it, we stand fast in the liberty with which God has set us free (623).
2. Our health teaching is not a matter of religious taboos; in fact, it is much more than careful selection in diet. It is, to us, the following of a well-balanced health program. We feel it to be our Christian duty to preserve our bodies in the best of health for the service and glory of God. We believe that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16), and that whether therefore we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do we should "do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31) (624).

XIII. The "Remnant Church"

1. *It is alleged that Seventh-day Adventists teach that they alone constitute the finally completed "remnant church" mentioned in the book of Revelation. ... Do Adventists maintain that they alone are the only true witnesses of the living God in our age?*

The answer to this threefold question will depend quite largely on the definition given to the word "remnant." If, as is implied in the second part, "remnant" is taken to mean the church invisible, our answer to the first part is an unqualified No. Seventh-day Adventists have never sought to equate their church with the church invisible—"Those in every denomination who remain faithful to the Scriptures" (186).

2. It is in a spirit of deep humility that we apply this Scripture to the Advent Movement and its work, for we recognize the tremendous implications of such an

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interpretation. While we believe that Revelation 12:17 points to us as a people of prophecy, it is in no spirit of pride that we thus apply the Scripture. To us it is the logical conclusion of our system of prophetic interpretation (191).

3. But the fact that we thus apply this Scripture does not imply in any way that we believe we are the only true Christians in the world, or that we are the only ones who will be saved (191–192).
4. Seventh-day Adventists firmly believe that God has a precious remnant, a multitude of earnest, sincere believers, in every church (192).
5. We believe the majority of God’s children are still scattered in this way throughout the world. And of course, the majority of these in Christian churches still conscientiously observe Sunday. We ourselves cannot do so, for we believe that God is calling for a reformation in this matter. But we respect and love those of our fellow Christians who do not interpret God’s Word just as we do (192–193).
6. We fully recognize the heartening fact that the host of the true followers of Christ are scattered all through the various churches of Christendom, including the Roman Catholic communion. These God clearly recognizes as His own. Such do not form a part of the “Babylon” portrayed in the Apocalypse (197).



Author’s Notes

1. The Concept of Christ’s Sinful Human Nature

Since almost all critics of Seventh-day Adventism contend that Seventh-day Adventists believe Christ possessed a sinful human nature during the Incarnation, a word should be said to clarify this point. These charges are often based on an article in *Signs of the Times*, March 1927, and a statement in *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, edition of 1944. Regarding the first reference, a critical article states:

My ... quotation is from L. A. Wilcox, for many years an editor of *The Signs of the Times*, which according to the latest figures given by the Adventists has been published by them for eighty-two years. Certainly a statement by an editor of that publication may be considered official. I’m sure that anything that Mr. Wilcox

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wrote did not just happen to get in. In March 1927 he wrote, "In His [Christ's] veins was the incubus of a tainted heredity like a caged lion ever seeking to break forth and destroy. Temptation attacked Him where by heredity He was weakest, attacked Him in unexpected times and ways. In spite of bad blood and an inherited meanness, He 'conquered.'"

And again, in the December 1928 issue of *Signs of the Times*, this editor Mr. Wilcox stated: "Jesus took humanity with all its liabilities, with all its dreadful risks of yielding to temptation."³⁰

First, L. A. Wilcox was never on the editorial staff of *Signs of the Times*. Moreover, Mr. L. A. Wilcox, who wrote the article, in a letter dated April 26, 1957, stated:

The writer of the *Signs* article was a very young man in 1927, and not by any means always felicitous in his phraseology. I know, for I was the writer. The first sentence quoted is crude and shocking and theologically inaccurate, and I was properly spanked for it by Adventist officials, which proves that this article cannot be truly represented as "official" or "authoritative."

It is no more than fair to point out that no man has taught more earnestly or fervently than I, as an Adventist minister, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinlessness of Christ, salvation by grace, righteousness by faith, the finished work of Calvary, a Christ-centered religion, than I—with the "Amen" of Seventh-day Adventist leadership.

Virtually every critic of Seventh-day Adventism, including the author quoted above, also uses a statement quoted from *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* (1944 edition, 174)—even though in 1945 the statement was expunged by Adventists because it was not in line with official Adventist theology.

A further quotation often seized upon is taken from the book *Desire of the Ages* by Ellen G. White. On page 117, she says, "Our Savior took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation." White also speaks of "fallen nature." Understandably, not having read all she has written on the subject, these critics conclude that she means that Christ possessed a sinful, carnal, or degenerate human nature. However, White's writings clearly indicate that when she speaks of the fallen nature of Christ, she means the physical properties of the race, which degenerated since the time of Adam, who was created perfect without the ravages of sin upon either his physical or spiritual being. Adam did not age before the Fall, but Christ was born into

³⁰ *The King's Business*, April 1957.

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the world a true man and with the curse of sin operative upon the physical properties of the human race. For over thirty years He endured the aging process. He could not have reached this point in life without organic changes taking place in His body, and were He not subject to the physical decline of the race, he would not have been a true man, “made under the law” (Galatians 4:4). White’s position has been held by many eminent scholars who have never been accused of being either heretics or non-Christians. Why, then, should she and the Adventists be condemned for holding this view? For centuries Christians have argued about the human nature of Christ. Some have believed that He could have sinned, but did not. Others, including this writer, that He could not have sinned. However, it is a theological issue not likely to be resolved by trite phrases and dogmatic pronouncements.

It is true that various Adventist publications, in the past and present, sometimes have contradicted one another. However, at its release and up through this year (see, for example, the quote presented earlier from the April 29, 1983, Adventist letter to me), *Questions on Doctrine* presents the official position of the Adventist denomination regarding Christ’s sinless nature. It is to that position that I can say “Amen.”

Dr. Anthony Hoekema, in his volume *The Four Major Cults*, falls into the same error as E. B. Jones, Louis Talbot, and other critics of Seventh-day Adventism and ignores totally the fact that Wilcox publicly and in print (1957) repudiated his position. This fact they all know but seem determined to ignore since Wilcox’s statement suits so well their assumption that despite official Adventist statements on doctrine, they, the critics, know more than the Adventists do about their own faith!

2. *The Concept of Incomplete Atonement*

It is also often charged that inherent in Adventist theology is the unbiblical teaching that “the atonement was not finished on the cross of Calvary.” Certain Seventh-day Adventist sources are cited to bolster these charges. For instance, Uriah Smith, a prominent Adventist of the past, stated in his book *Looking Unto Jesus*, “Christ did not make the atonement when He shed His blood upon the cross.” Other earlier writers such as J. H. Waggoner have expressed the same thought. He said, “There is a clear distinction between the death of Christ and the atonement.”³¹ Even some later writers like C. H. Watson have been influenced by these early exponents of Adventism.

However, a little investigation of these writings would show that Smith and Waggoner wrote eighty years ago. As demonstrated elsewhere in this book, this concept has been repudiated by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. The current position of the

³¹ J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement in the Light of Nature and Revelation*, n.p., n.d., 181.

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Seventh-day Adventist denomination—not the opinions of a few scattered writers over a hundred-year period—should be considered in judging this charge of an “incomplete atonement.”

Current Adventist writings teach that the atonement was completed on the cross, and no less an Adventist than Ellen G. White, writing in the *Review and Herald*, September 21, 1901, stated: “Christ planted the cross between heaven and earth and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of His perfection. ‘It is enough,’ He said. ‘The atonement is completed.’” In the same periodical, under the date of August 16, 1899, White stated, “No language could convey the rejoicing of heaven or God’s expression of satisfaction and delight in His only begotten Son when He saw the completion of the atonement.”

Many more quotations could be cited, but critics usually overlook the greater number of statements relative to the completeness of the atonement that are readily available in past and present Seventh-day Adventist literature.

Nothing could be clearer than the Adventist declaration that:

When ... one hears an Adventist say or reads in Adventist literature—even in the writings of Ellen G. White—that Christ is making atonement now, it should be understood that we mean simply that Christ is now making application of the benefits of the sacrificial atonement He made on the cross; that He is making it efficacious for us individually, according to our needs and requests. Mrs. White herself, as far back as 1857, clearly explained what she means when she writes of Christ’s making atonement for us in His ministry:

The great Sacrifice had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where Jesus entered by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples the *benefits* of His atonement (*Questions on Doctrine*, 354–355).

Is Seventh-day Adventism a Non-Christian Cult?

We earlier mentioned Dr. Anthony Hoekema’s book *The Four Major Cults*, in which he classifies Seventh-day Adventism as a non-Christian cult system. It is necessary for me to take exception with Dr. Hoekema in this area because, in my opinion, the reasons which Dr. Hoekema gives cannot be justified by the Word of God, historical theology, or present-day practices in denominational Christianity as a whole. To illustrate this point, Dr. Hoekema stated, “I am of the conviction that Seventh-day Adventism is a cult and

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not an evangelical denomination. In support of this evaluation I propose to show that the traits that we have found to be distinctive of the cults do apply to this movement” (389).

Dr. Hoekema then proceeds to list his reasons:

1. An Extra-Scriptural Source of Authority (Ellen G. White).
2. The Denial of Justification by Grace Alone.
 - a. The Investigative Judgment.
 - b. The Keeping of the Sabbath.
3. The Devaluation of Christ.
4. The Group as the Exclusive Community of the Saved.

It is Dr. Hoekema’s contention that Ellen White is an extra-biblical authority in that her counsels are taken to be manifestations of the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12). But granting that the Adventists are entitled to believe that this gift was manifested in White as evidence of the *charismata* (a fact Dr. Hoekema could hardly honestly challenge since the gifts of the Spirit have been and are still manifested in the Christian church), why does he not take into consideration the repeated emphasis of Adventist writers concerning their official pronouncement, *Questions on Doctrine*, to the effect that they do not consider White to be an extra-biblical authority, but that her writings are only authoritative in those areas where they are in agreement with the Word of God, which is the final standard for judging all the gifts of the Spirit?

If the Adventists put White’s writings on a par with Holy Scripture; if they interpreted the Bible in the light of her writings, and not the reverse; if they willingly admitted this and owned it as their position, his criticism would be justified, but they do not do so. Dr. Hoekema has apparently ignored what the Adventists say they believe concerning White in favor of what he thinks they mean as a result of his deduction from certain of their publications. It is far safer to accept at face value the published statements of a denomination representing its theology, particularly if, as in the case of *Questions on Doctrine*, they are answering direct questions bearing on the subject, than it is to rely upon one’s own preconceived interpretations, as Dr. Hoekema has apparently done in this instance.

It is a serious charge to maintain that any professing Christian group denies justification by grace alone as the basis of eternal salvation; and, if the Adventists were guilty of this, surely there would be ground for considering them as a cultic system. However, literally scores of times in their book *Questions on Doctrine*, and in various other publications, the

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Adventists affirm that salvation comes only by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice upon the cross.

Why it is necessary again for Dr. Hoekema to question the sincerity of the Adventists in this area and yet accept at face value their other statements concerning their faith in the Scriptures, the Trinity, the full deity of Jesus Christ, Creation, Providence, Incarnation, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the absolute necessity for regeneration, sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and Christ's literal return, is a puzzling inconsistency in his presentation. (See *The Four Major Cults*, 403.)

Dr. Hoekema insists that the investigative judgment and the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath are part of the reasons why he classifies Seventh-day Adventists as cultists, but, in doing this, he makes his Calvinistic interpretation of theology the criterion while ignoring the claims of the Arminian school and of semi-Arminian and semi-Calvinistic theologians, many of whom take strong exception to Dr. Hoekema's pronounced Calvinism. On the basis that Dr. Hoekema would call the Adventists a cult, the same charge could be leveled against all devoted Calvinists who consider the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and Calvin's *Commentaries* every bit as much illumination and guides in the study of the Scriptures as the Adventists do where White's writings are concerned. In addition to this, the Seventh-day Baptists are Arminian in their theology and keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Are they, too, a non-Christian cult? They certainly meet some of Dr. Hoekema's qualifications.

Underscoring his Calvinistic oppositions, Dr. Hoekema writes:

Adventists further teach that it is possible for a person through subsequent sinful deeds and attitudes to lose the justification he once received. This teaching implies that one can only be sure of retaining his justification if he continues to do the right kind of deeds and to maintain the right attitudes throughout the rest of his life (390).

This point on the investigative judgment is clear evidence of Arminianism in which Dr. Hoekema finds sufficient ground to justify the cult label being applied to Adventists. But why only to Adventists? Why not to Pentecostals, Methodists, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and others who accept the same Arminian premises, though they have not carried them out to the literalism that the Adventists have in the investigative judgment?

Relative to Sabbatarianism, the fourteenth chapter of Romans justifies the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath or any other day by any Christian who believes he is keeping it unto the Lord. It can become legalistic as Sunday can become legalistic, but merely because the seventh day is honored instead of the first day is no ground for the description of "cult."

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Dr. Hoekema, on page 394 of his volume, affirms:

Seventh-day Adventists do not ... deny the full deity of Jesus Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity. ... Seventh-day Adventists today affirm Christ's complete equality with the Father, and the preexistence of the Son from eternity. ... Adventists also accept the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of the personality and full deity of the Holy Spirit.

As far as the work of Christ is concerned, Seventh-day Adventists teach the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ ... Yet there remains some ambiguity in their teachings on the question of whether the atonement has been finished on the cross, since Mrs. White says on more than one occasion that Christ is making atonement for us today and frequently refers to a "final atonement" after the one completed on the cross.

Dr. Hoekema follows this up by listing five reasons for his feeling that the Adventists "devalue" Christ. Three of these points involve Arminianism, concerning which Dr. Hoekema has an admitted prejudice; the fourth concerns the Sabbath, which is a matter of Christian liberty, unless one presupposes Calvin's interpretation; and the fifth reiterates the old accusation that the Seventh-day Adventists believe that "the sins of all men will be laid on Satan just before Christ returns, and that only in this way will sin finally be 'eradicated' or 'blotted out' of the universe" (395–396).

Once again, Dr. Hoekema defeats his own case by admitting that the Adventists are soundly orthodox in their Christology, hardly a devaluation of Christ!

The implications and deductions that he draws from their Arminianism cannot be considered as evidence against the Adventists, since not only they but the entire Arminian school of theological interpretation could argue vigorously for the principles that the Adventists lay down.

Finally, the Adventists themselves have repeatedly affirmed that Christ alone vicariously bears the sins of the world and that Satan only bears "his responsibility" for tempting the world to sin.

A careful reading of the book *Questions on Doctrine*, which Dr. Hoekema lists in his bibliography in *The Four Major Cults*, would have answered his question regarding White's usage of the terms "making atonement now" and "final atonement."

The Adventists declare forthrightly that whenever terms of this nature are used, they understand them to refer to the benefits of the atonement of Christ being shed abroad

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through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and disown completely any implication or suggestion that the atonement of Christ was not completed on the cross.

Dr. Hoekema, in company with other critics of Adventism, has not hesitated to draw upon repudiated sources to underscore the claim that the Adventists devalue Christ. On page 114 of *The Four Major Cults*, Dr. Hoekema states,

One of the best known is the statement by L. A. Wilcox, to the effect that Christ conquered sin “in spite of bad blood and an inherited meanness.” Though the discussion of this matter in *Questions on Doctrine* implies that the denomination would now repudiate this statement, nowhere in the book are we definitely told that this has been done.

In my book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, conclusive proof was introduced of the total repudiation of that statement by Wilcox himself. Dr. Hoekema lists the book in his bibliography, but unfortunately omits reference to Wilcox’s repudiation in order to utilize Wilcox’s statement. This is not a fair representation of what the Adventist denomination has taught or teaches in this area.

These are a few of the problems that face the interested student of the puzzle of Seventh-day Adventism, and they must be fairly considered before hastily classifying Adventism as a non-Christian cult.

Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy

In most religious movements, one extraordinary and gifted personality dominates the scene, and so it was with Seventh-day Adventism. This dominant personality was and is today, through her writings, Ellen G. White. She was one of the most fascinating and controversial individuals ever to appear upon the horizon of religious history. Her memory and work have been praised by Adventists and damned by many of their enemies since the early years of the movement. Born Ellen Gould Harmon at Gorham, Maine, in 1827, and reared a devout Methodist in the city of Portland, White was early recognized as an unusual person, for she bore witness to certain “revelations,” which she believed she had received from heaven.

When Ellen was thirteen, the Harmon family came under the influence of the Millerite movement. William Miller delivered a series of addresses in the Casco Street Christian Church in Portland in 1841 and 1842. At the age of seventeen, Ellen embraced the

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Adventist faith of the Millerites.³² Although deeply stirred by Miller's sincerity and his chronological calculations, the Harmon family remained in fellowship with the Chestnut Street Methodist Church of Portland, which in 1845 disfellowshipped them because they believed in the pre-millennial second advent of Jesus Christ.

Despite her youth, Ellen Harmon passed through trying times, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, between 1837 and 1843. In the words of Dr. Froom, "She rebelled against the dismal prospects resulting from an early accident, and its attendant invalidism."³³ In 1840, at a Methodist camp meeting at Buxton, Maine, Ellen Harmon found wonderful deliverance and "her burden rolled from her shoulders," for she experienced great joy in learning that she was truly a child of God, which she publicly confessed afterward by requesting baptism by immersion. Many points still perplexed her, among them the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked, which in subsequent years she surrendered to as well as the concept of conditional immortality and the sleep of the soul while awaiting the resurrection. In December 1844, after "The Great Disappointment," while visiting a friend in Portland, Ellen Harmon experienced what she termed her first vision that portrayed the "vindication" of the Adventist faith. In that vision she claimed to see the Adventists triumphant over their critics—pressing upward to heaven in the face of insuperable obstacles.

For many years controversy has raged about White and her "revelations," and there are conflicting opinions within and without Adventism regarding both the extent and nature of her "revelations" and "inspiration." The position of Ellen White in Adventist teaching, then, is most significant and must be understood if we are to get a proper picture of this people. The writings and counsels of Ellen Harmon (later Ellen G. White by her marriage to James White, a prominent Adventist leader) are termed the "Spirit of prophecy," an expression taken from Revelation 19:10. Adventists believe that in the last days special counsels from God are to be revealed, which neither add to nor contradict Scripture, and that these counsels are primarily for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. And, while following these counsels, they claim they always test them by the Word of God. Finally, they believe that the visions of Mrs. White and her counsels to their denomination are the "Spirit of prophecy" for their church.

There is a circular reasoning involved in defending White. Adventists say that the writers of the Bible did the same thing in quoting (without credit) pagan sources as did White. If they are permitted to do so, then she should be permitted to do so. That only holds,

³² Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, n.d.), 64–68.

³³ *The Prophetic Faith*, 4:978.

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however, if one assumes that White is to be considered as one of the writers of the Bible. That is giving her a rank official Adventist representatives won't give her!

Through the years, some overzealous Adventist writers have given the impression that everything White said or wrote, even in private letters, was inspired and infallible. This is decidedly not the official position. The Adventist denomination readily admits that not everything White said or wrote was either inspired or infallible, although some individual Adventists still cling to that idea. Until the Adventists officially repudiate the doctrinal statements of *Questions on Doctrine* and officially espouse the errant doctrinal statements of some Adventists and Adventist factions, we can use *Questions on Doctrine* as representative of the denomination's official views. This we have done below.

*I. Seventh-day Adventist Statements—Life and Ministry of Ellen G. White*³⁴

1. We do not regard the writings of Ellen G. White as an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture. We do not think of them as of universal application, as is the Bible, but particularly for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We do not regard them in the same sense as the Holy Scriptures, which stand alone and unique as the standard by which all other writings must be judged (89).
2. Seventh-day Adventists uniformly believe that the canon of Scripture closed with the Book of Revelation. We hold that all other writings and teachings, from whatever source, are to be judged by and are subject to the Bible, which is the spring and norm of the Christian faith (89–90).
3. I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged (90).
4. The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested (90).
5. We have never considered Ellen G. White to be in the same category as the writers of the canon of Scripture (90).
6. It is in ... the category of messengers [other than the biblical writers] that we consider Ellen G. White to be. Among Seventh-day Adventists, she was recognized as one who possessed the gift of the Spirit of prophecy, though she herself never assumed the title of prophetess (91).

³⁴ Page numbers are in *Questions on Doctrine*, unless otherwise indicated.

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7. Seventh-day Adventists regard her writings as containing inspired counsel and instruction concerning personal religion and the conduct of our denominational work. ... That portion of her writings, however, that might be classified as predictions, actually forms but a small segment. And even when she deals with what is coming on the earth, her statements are only amplifications of clear Bible prophecy (92).
8. In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience (92–93, quoting Ellen G. White).
9. While Adventists hold the writings of Ellen G. White in highest esteem, these are not the source of our expositions. We base our teachings on the Scripture, the only foundation of all true Christian doctrine. However, it is our belief that the Holy Spirit opened to her mind important events and called her to give certain instructions for these last days. And inasmuch as these instructions, in our understanding, are in harmony with the Word of God, which Word alone is able to make us wise unto salvation, we as a denomination accept them as inspired counsels from the Lord. But we have never equated them with Scripture as some falsely charge. Mrs. White herself stated explicitly the relation of her writings to the Bible: “Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light” (*Review and Herald*, January 20, 1903; *Questions on Doctrine*, 93).
10. While Seventh-day Adventists recognize the Scripture canon closed nearly two thousand years ago and that there have been no additions to this compilation of sacred books, yet we believe that the Spirit of God, who inspired the Divine Word known to us as the Bible, has pledged to reveal himself to the church and through the various gifts of the Spirit. ... It is not our understanding that these gifts of the Spirit take the place of the Word of God, nor does their acceptance make unnecessary the Scripture of truth. On the contrary, the acceptance of God’s Word will lead God’s people to a recognition and acceptance of the manifestation of the Spirit. Such manifestations will, of course, be in harmony with the Word of God. We know that some earnest Christians have the impression that these gifts ceased with the apostolic church. But Adventists believe that the closing of the Scripture canon did not terminate heaven’s communication with men through the gifts of the Spirit, but rather that Christ by the ministry of His Spirit guides His people, edifying and strengthening them, and especially so in these last challenging days of human history (93–95).

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11. The Spirit of prophecy is intimately related to the gift of prophecy, the one being the Spirit that indicted the prophecy, the other the evidence of the gift bestowed. They go together, each inseparably connected with the other. The gift is the manifestation of that which the Spirit of God bestows upon him whom, according to His own good purpose and plan, He selects as the one through whom such spiritual guidance is to come. Briefly then, this is the Adventist understanding of Ellen G. White's writings. They have been for a hundred years, to use her own expression, "a lesser light" leading sincere men and women to "the greater light" (96).
12. Concerning the matter of church fellowship, we would say that while we revere the writings of Ellen G. White ... we do not make acceptance of her writings as a matter for church discipline. She herself was explicit on this point. Speaking of those who did not fully understand the gift, she said: "Such should not be deprived of the benefits and privileges of the church, if their Christian course is otherwise correct and they have formed a good Christian character" (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, 328; *Questions on Doctrine*, 96–97).
13. We therefore do not test the world in any manner by these gifts. Nor do we in our intercourse with other religious bodies who are striving to walk in the fear of God, in any way make these a test of Christian character (J. N. Andrews in *Review and Herald*, February 15, 1870; *Questions on Doctrine*, 97).
14. James White, thrice General Conference president, speaking of the work of Ellen G. White, expressly declares that Adventists believe that God called her "to do a special work at this time, among this people. They do not, however, make a belief in this work a test of Christian fellowship" (*Review and Herald*, June 13, 1871; *Questions on Doctrine*, 97).
15. In the practice of the church it has not been customary to disfellowship one because he did not recognize the doctrine of spiritual gifts. ... A member of the church should not be excluded from membership because of his inability to recognize clearly the doctrine of spiritual gifts and its application to the second advent movement (98).

It may be seen from these quotations that Seventh-day Adventists hold to the restoration of the "gift of prophecy" in the last days of the Christian church, and that they believe this restoration occurred in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. The Adventists differ from other churches in that while they hold the Bible to be the unique, complete, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, they maintain that in specific contexts Ellen White's

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writings are to be accepted by Adventists as “testimonies” from the Spirit of God to guide their denominational activities.

Dr. Wilbur M. Smith has summed up the objections of most evangelicals where Seventh-day Adventism’s emphasis upon White and the Spirit of prophecy is involved when he recently observed White’s place in the new Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary.

I do not know any other denomination in all of Christendom today that has given such recognition, so slavishly and exclusively, to its founder or principal theologian as has this commentary to the writings of Ellen White. At the conclusion of every chapter in this work is a section headed, “Ellen G. White Comments.” For example, on Genesis 28, the blessing conferred upon Jacob, there are less than three pages of comment, but at the end, forty references to the various works of Ellen White. In addition, at the end of the first volume of this commentary is a section again headed, “Ellen G. White Comments,” containing eighty columns of material quoted from her writings. There is no section devoted to anyone else—Calvin, Luther, Wesley, or anyone else.

The Preface to this commentary contains the statement: “At the close of each chapter is a cross reference or index to those passages in Ellen G. White’s writings that comment on the various texts in that chapter.” And the second sentence following reads: “The Advent movement has grown strong through the study of the Bible; and it can be said with equal truth that the movement has been safely guided in that study by the light shining from the Spirit of prophecy.” I would say that the writers of this commentary believe that “the Spirit of prophecy” has rested conclusively upon Ellen G. White, for no one else is so classified in this work.³⁵

Dr. Smith is correct in his evaluation of the place of Ellen G. White’s writings in the denomination. Seventh-day Adventists are of necessity committed to her visions and counsel because they believe that the Spirit of prophecy rested upon her and upon no other person of their group.

This writer rejects this concept of inspiration but one should carefully note that, for Adventists, “inspiration” in connection with White’s writings has a rather different meaning from the inspiration of the Bible. Adventists freely admit that the Bible is objectively the Word of God, the final authority in all matters of faith and morals. But the writings of White cannot be so regarded, and they are the first to say so. Apparently, they have adopted a qualified view of inspiration as related to her writings—“a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light”—which emphasizes subjective interpretation

³⁵ Excerpt from a letter to the author.

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as the criterion for determining specifically where in White's writings the "Spirit of prophecy" has decisively spoken. There is no doubt in my mind that the Adventists are defending a situation which is at best paradoxical and at times contradictory. But this position, as a matter of religious liberty, they are entitled to hold so long as they do not make faith in White's writings a test of fellowship between themselves and other denominations, and do not attempt to compel other Christians to accept the "testimonies" of White as indispensable to a deeper, richer experience of Christian consecration and living.

If Seventh-day Adventists did indeed claim for White inspiration in every area of her writings, then we might well be cautious about having fellowship with them. However, this they do not do, as I have amply demonstrated from official denominational sources. Since they do not consider White's teachings the source of their expositions of faith, the claim that one has only to refute Ellen G. White and her writings in order to refute Seventh-day Adventism falls by its own weight.

II. Mrs. White and Her Critics

Through the years a great deal of literature has appeared, criticizing the life and works of Ellen G. White. These criticisms have ranged from the mild judgment that White was a sincere but emotionally disturbed mystic to the charge that she was a "false prophetess" who sought material gain and deliberately plagiarized much of her writing. In the interest of honest investigation and truth, and since it is impossible in a book of this size to analyze all the conflicting data, we shall present some highlights of the controversy and let the reader determine the validity of these charges.

The inspiration for 90 percent of the destructive personal criticisms leveled against White is found in the writings of Dudley M. Canright, an ex-Adventist leader of great ability, and a one-time personal friend of Ellen G. White and her husband, James, as well as a great number of prominent Adventist leaders. Canright, one of the most able of the Seventh-day Adventist writers and debaters of his day, left the movement because he lost faith in the inspiration of White and in many doctrines then held by the Adventist Church. While it is true that Canright thrice ceased to preach, his credentials as a minister were never revoked. He finally resigned from the Seventh-day Adventist ministry in 1887 to become a Baptist minister. By Canright's own admission, his personality conflicts with Ellen G. White and her advisers were largely responsible for his turning away from the active ministry at the times mentioned. He, however, apparently maintained close personal relations with James White, Mrs. White's husband, and other prominent Seventh-day Adventist leaders, as is evident from the correspondence quoted below. Canright rebelled violently against Arianism (the denial of the deity of Christ) and extreme legalism, which existed among some of the early Seventh-day Adventists; and

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his convictions led him later to write two volumes (*Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, and *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*), which systematically and scathingly denounced Seventh-day Adventism theologically and impugned the personal motives and integrity of White.

In these two volumes, D. M. Canright laid the foundation for all future destructive criticism of Seventh-day Adventism, and careful research has confirmed the impression that nearly all subsequent similar publications are little more than repetitions of the destructive areas of Canright's writing, buttressed by standard theological arguments. This is especially true of the writings of a former Seventh-day Adventist missionary printer, E. B. Jones, editor of a small news sheet, *Guardians of the Faith*, who has issued a number of vitriolic pamphlets against Seventh-day Adventism, all of which are drawn almost exclusively from Canright and other critics, and are for the most part outdated and in some cases both scholastically and ethically unreliable. It can be seen, therefore, that what D. M. Canright has written about Ellen G. White is of prime importance as firsthand evidence, and no Seventh-day Adventist apologist, regardless of the scope of his knowledge of Adventism or the breadth of his scholastic learning, can gainsay all that Canright has written.

In the March 22, 1887 issue of the *Review and Herald*, his former brethren wrote of Elder Canright:

We have felt exceedingly sad to part in our religious connection with one whom we have long esteemed as a dear brother. ... In leaving us he has taken a much more manly and commendable course than most of those who have withdrawn from us, coming voluntarily to our leading brethren and frankly stating the condition of mind he was in. He did this before his own church in our presence and so far as we know has taken no unfair underhanded means to injure us in any way. He goes from our midst with no immoral stain upon his character. He chooses associations more pleasant to himself. This is every man's personal privilege if he chooses to take it.

Writing to Canright on May 22, 1881, from Battle Creek, Michigan, James White, Ellen's husband, stated, "It is time there was a change in the offices of the General Conference. I trust that if we are true and faithful, the Lord will be pleased that we should constitute two of that Board." In another letter to Canright, dated July 13, 1881, James White said, "Brother Canright, I feel more interest in you than in any other man because I know your worth when the Lord is with you as a laborer." It is apparent, therefore, that Canright was in good standing with the Adventists, despite his later renunciation of White's testimonies and the "special truths" of the Adventist message.

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In 1951 a carefully documented volume of almost 700 pages was issued by the Review and Herald Publishing Association of Washington, D.C. The author was Francis D. Nichol, leading apologist of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This volume, entitled *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, attempts a point-for-point refutation of many of the charges made by D. M. Canright in his *Life of Mrs. E. G. White*. Nichol has dug deep into early Adventist history—even beyond Canright's day. In addition, after reading both Nichol and Canright, I have concluded that there is much to be said on both sides. But Canright, we believe, has the edge because he can say, "I was there" or "White said," and contradictory contemporary statements are not to be found where many of Canright's charges are concerned.

My own conclusion is that in some areas (particularly theology) Canright's statements are irrefutable, especially with regard to his personal relationships with White and the leading members of the Adventist denomination. It is also significant to note that many charges that are based on personal experiences and have been well documented have never been refuted.

By this I do not mean that all of Canright's writing is to be trusted, for many of his criticisms of White's activities have been neatly undercut by contemporary evidence unearthed by F. D. Nichol and others. Where Nichol is concerned, "methinks he doth protest too much," and he often goes to extremes to defend White. This, in my judgment, has hurt his case and has proved nothing except that he is a devoted disciple of White and therefore strongly biased. Nonetheless, Nichol is the most able Adventist apologist.

III. The Verdict of the Evidence

After considering all the evidence obtainable, of which the foregoing is only a part, this writer is convinced that Ellen G. White was a highly impressionable woman, strongly influenced by her associates. That she sincerely believed the Lord spoke to her, none can fairly question, but the evidence set forth in this book gives good reason, we believe, to doubt the inspiration of her counsels, whether Seventh-day Adventists will concede this or not.

My personal evaluation of the visions of Ellen G. White is best summed up in the following statement from a friendly critic. In 1847, at the outset of her work, one of White's cousins stated,

I cannot endorse Sister Ellen's visions as of Divine inspiration, as you and she think them to be; yet I do not suspect the least shade of dishonesty in either of you in this matter. I may, perhaps, express to you my belief in the latter without harm—it will, doubtless, result either in your good or mine. At the same time I admit the possibility of my being

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mistaken. I think that what she and you regard as visions from the Lord are only religious reveries in which her imagination runs without control upon themes in which she is most deeply interested. While so absorbed in these reveries she is lost to everything around her. Reveries are of two kinds: sinful and religious. In either case, the sentiments in the main are obtained from previous teaching or study. I do not by any means think that her visions are from the Devil.³⁶ ³⁶

If Seventh-day Adventists are to defend their claim for White's inspiration, they must explain a number of contradictions in her writings. They would do better to admit, we believe, that she was very human, capable of errors in judgment, and subject to lapses of memory.

It is my considered opinion that Ellen G. White had an extremely complex personality, and that she plagiarized materials because she believed the Lord had shown her that what the sources said was the truth. She simply appropriated material and gave it out. Her actions cannot be excused, but they can be understood as the actions of a Christian who made mistakes. She was both mortal and a sinner like anyone else. I think those around her aided and abetted her in her "cover-up." Also, I think the White estate continued the cover-up for many years after her death. No objective person, in possession of all the facts, can doubt this.

The difference between her and, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses, is not the crime itself. What she did was wrong. The difference is in the nature of the person we are talking about. Was Jehovah's Witness founder Charles Taze Russell a Christian? Did he hold to the foundations of the Gospel? Did he promulgate the things of Christianity and stand in their defense? No. Did Ellen White? Yes. Therefore, although she committed the same crime he did, she cannot be judged on the same basis as Charles Russell. She was a Christian who committed a sin. Christians can and do commit sins.

A biblical false prophet was not a believer. A biblical false prophet was a servant of the devil attempting to lead people away from the truth. White, in my opinion, made false statements. She misused what she claimed was the prophetic gift she had. But one cannot say that she was like a biblical false prophet. Of course, technically, all would agree that the person who prophesies in the name of God and turns out to be wrong has prophesied falsely. But White was not a biblical false prophet because she was a true Christian, even though what she did was sinful.

White was definitely influenced in some of her writings by time and circumstances, and also by the powerful personalities who surrounded her. Some Adventists maintain that

³⁶ Reproduced in Elder James White, *A Word to the Little Flock* (n.p., 1847), 29.

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this would in no way prevent her conveying messages from the Lord. However, as I see it, anyone who attempts to prove she was divinely inspired or infallible (no informed Adventist holds the latter) must first dispose of the evidence here presented, as well as other evidence that space does not admit to include. F. D. Nichol, in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, makes a masterful attempt to answer some of these problems, but not all of them can be answered with a good conscience or an airtight defense of White and her actions. It does not detract from her stature as a sincere Christian or from the quality of her contribution to insist upon an honest and systematic evaluation of her statements by thinking Adventists, or to ascertain to what degree Adventists may rightfully maintain that the Lord “spoke” through White. Non-Adventists, of course, reject the claims made for White and her writings and hope that Adventists will some day amend their questionable view of “Ellen G. White and the Spirit of prophecy.”

After reading the publications of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and almost all the writings of Ellen G. White, including her *Testimonies*, the writer believes White was truly a regenerate Christian woman who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and dedicated herself unstintingly to the task of bearing witness for Him as she felt led. It should be clearly understood that some tenets of Christian theology, as historically understood, and White’s interpretations of them do not agree; indeed, they are at loggerheads. Nevertheless, Ellen G. White was true to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith regarding the salvation of the soul and the believer’s life in Christ. We must disagree with White’s interpretation of the sanctuary, the investigative judgment, and the scapegoat; we challenge her stress upon the Sabbath, health reform, the unconscious state of the dead, and the final destruction of the wicked, etc. But no one can dispute the fact that her writings conform to the basic principles of the historical Gospel, for they most certainly do. However, we must not assume as many Adventists do that White’s writings are free from theological and exegetical error, for they are not. Although I believe that the influence of White’s counsels on the Adventist denomination parallels the influence of J. N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren and A. B. Simpson of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the claim that she possessed a “gift of prophecy” akin to that described in 1 Corinthians 14, as believed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I cannot accept.

Contemporary Adventists affirm that White was not infallible, did borrow (unfortunately, usually without attribution) from other sources, and taught from within a nineteenth-century theological context. Adventist professor Gary Land notes, “The research of the 1970s established three points: Ellen White borrowed much material from others; she was a part of late-nineteenth-century culture; and she was not inerrant. From the furor of opposition to Ronald Number’s study in the mid-1970s, the denomination—though obviously uncomfortable with public discussion of the issue—had by the end of

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the decade moved toward accepting the general points that the entire body of research had established."³⁷

Many critics of Seventh-day Adventism have assumed, mostly from the writings of professional detractors, that White was a fearsome ogre who devoured all who opposed her, and they have never ceased to make the false claim that Seventh-day Adventists believe that White is infallible, despite the often-published authoritative statement to the contrary. Although Seventh-day Adventists do hold White and her writings in great esteem, they maintain that the Bible is their only "rule of faith and practice." Christians of all denominations may heatedly disagree with the Seventh-day Adventist attitude toward White, but all that she wrote on such subjects as salvation or Christian living characterizes her as a Christian in every sense of the term.

Farther on in this discussion, we shall look at White's relations with the Adventist denomination, particularly in the field of theology. Enough has been presented here, however, to show that she was a most interesting personality, far different from the "Sister White" idealized beyond reality in certain Seventh-day Adventist publications.

Dudley M. Canright, the chief critic of Seventh-day Adventism, has, I feel, rendered good service in this respect. He has presented the human side of White from the standpoint of a firsthand friendship that lasted through the formative years of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Despite his criticisms of Seventh-day Adventism and of White, Canright himself never ceased to believe that despite what he believed to be her errors in theology and her mistaken concept of visions, she was a regenerate Christian. With his brother, Canright attended the funeral of White in 1915. His brother describes the occasion thus: "We joined the passing throng, and again stood by the bier. My brother rested his hand upon the side of the casket, and with tears rolling down his cheeks, he said brokenly, 'There is a noble Christian woman gone!'"³⁸

The controversy between Seventh-day Adventist historians and the personal recollections of D. M. Canright will probably never be settled this side of heaven, but beyond question, Canright has left an indelible mark upon the history of both the denomination and Ellen G. White, a woman of great moral fortitude and indomitable conviction. Her influence will doubtless affect the religious world through the Seventh-day Adventist denomination for many years to come.

³⁷ Gary Land, ed., *Adventism in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 223.

³⁸ W. A. Spicer, *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, n.d.), 127.

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The Sleep of the Soul and the Destruction of the Wicked

The doctrine of conditional immortality, commonly called “soul-sleep” outside Adventist circles, and its necessary corollary, annihilation, have been cardinal teachings from the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They must be dealt with from an exegetical standpoint if the theology underlying the basic premise is to be understood. These positions, incidentally, are held today by the Advent Christian Church, an affiliate of the National Association of Evangelicals, and by outstanding Bible scholars in not a few denominations.

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The purpose here is essentially to review the historical position of the Christian church from the days of the apostles to the present, and to examine the teaching of the Scriptures on these subjects. Many noted Christians of the past believed in conditional immortality, among them Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and John Wycliffe, all of whom were competent Greek scholars. Luther even stated that he could not support the doctrine of immortality of the soul, which he called one of the “endless monstrosities in the Roman dunghill of decretals.”³⁹ Tyndale declared that:

In putting them [the souls of the departed dead] in heaven, hell, and purgatory [you] destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection. ... And again, if the souls be in heaven, tell me why they be not in as good case as the angels be? And then what cause is there for the resurrection?⁴⁰

However, in his *Commentary on Genesis*, Luther later categorically stated, “In the interim [between death and resurrection], the soul does not sleep but is awake and enjoys the vision of angels and of God, and has converse with them.”⁴¹

In any case, neither preponderance of one opinion nor the opinions of a few great thinkers can validate theological speculation or interpretation. The Christian church does not base its belief in the conscious bliss of departed saints on the opinions of individuals, no matter how prominent or learned, but upon the historical, biblical foundation of the Christian faith.

I. Textual Analysis

The Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the sleep of the soul is best expressed in their own words: “We as Adventists believe that, in general, the Scriptures teach that the soul of man represents the whole man, and not a particular part independent of the other

³⁹ Weimar edition of Luther’s *Works*, VII:131–132.

⁴⁰ *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue*, Parker’s 1850 reprint, book 4, chap. iv, 180–181.

⁴¹ *Works*, 25:321.

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component parts of man's nature; and further, that the soul cannot exist apart from the body, for man is a unit. ... We, as Adventists, have reached the definite conclusion that man rests in the tomb until the resurrection morning. Then, at the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4–5), the resurrection of the just (Acts 24:15), the righteous come forth immortalized at the call of Christ, the Lifegiver. And they then enter into life everlasting in their eternal home in the kingdom of glory. Such is our understanding."⁴²

In the 1988 explanation of Adventist doctrine, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, the grave is described: "The grave is not a place of consciousness. Since death is a sleep, the dead will remain in a state of unconsciousness in the grave until the resurrection, when the grave (*Hades*) gives up its dead."⁴³

The key to the preceding statements, of course, is the last phrase of the former quote: "They then enter into life everlasting in their eternal home in the kingdom of glory." Now, the majority of Christians through the centuries have held that this proposition contradicts the teaching of the Word of God contained in the following passages:

1. *1 John 5:11–13*: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." In the grammar and context of this passage eternal life (*eionion zoes*) is the present possession of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if the term eternal life does not include conscious fellowship then the whole New Testament meaning is destroyed. The Holy Spirit used the present indicative active of the verb *echo*, expressing present, continuous action. Thus we see that the believer, having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, already possesses never-ending life as a continuing quality of conscious existence.

2. *John 11:25–26*: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" The context here indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ was consoling Martha upon the death of her brother Lazarus. Therefore, the words *life* and *dead* must refer to that particular occasion. To attempt to wrest the meanings of these terms from their expressed context, and to teach that the end of the age is primarily in view or somehow close, is a violation of the grammar and context.

⁴² *Questions on Doctrine*, 515, 520.

⁴³ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 353.

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All thorough students of the Word of God, including the Adventists, recognize that in any study of the doctrines of eternal life and immortality, it is vitally essential to apply the hermeneutic principle (comparing all texts on a given subject) of interpretation, and the application of this principle, we believe, leads to the following facts. The root meanings for the words *death* and *life* in the New Testament usage (“death” *thantos*, in its verb form *apothnesko*, and “life” *zoe*, or its verb form *zac*) are respectively “separation or to separate” from communion or fellowship. The Scriptures describe two types of death, physical and spiritual, the former being the separation of the body from the soul, and the latter being the separation of the soul from God as the result of sin. Also, two kinds of life are spoken of in the New Testament: physical life (*bios*), which is the union or communion of body and soul; and spiritual life (*zoe*), which is the communion or fellowship of the soul with God. These terms we equate with the Greek of the New Testament, and they are essential to an understanding of Christ’s words to Martha.

He was assuring her that despite the physical evidence of death, Jesus, the eternal Word of God made flesh, was himself the source of life. And as such, He was able to give life, even though death had actually occurred. Let us therefore take His words literally.

Christ’s primary purpose was to comfort Martha. And what better comfort could He give than the knowledge that her family’s limited concept of life as dependent upon the resurrection was depriving her of the joyous knowledge that the Prince of Life gives to the believer eternal life, unaffected by physical death.

Now let us look carefully at this context with no violation to hermeneutics or grammar, and this great truth becomes clear. John 11:20 tells us that as soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming to Bethany, she went out to meet Him. In verse 21 she greets Him thus: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” In answer to her obvious affliction and grief, Jesus, with divine compassion, stated, “Thy brother shall rise again.” Verse 24 indicates, however, that Martha thought He was referring to the resurrection of the dead that will take place at “the last day.”

To dispel her confused and grief-instilling concept of life (spiritual life), Jesus gives comfort beyond measure: “I am the resurrection and the life,” He declares; “he that believes in me, even though he were dead, yet shall he live, and the one living and believing in me shall never die.”

Now it is apparent from the context of verse 25 that Jesus was referring to Martha’s brother Lazarus, one who believed in Him and had physically died. Christ’s promise is, “yet shall he live.” But going beyond this, Jesus lifts the veil and reveals that, in the realm of the physically alive, whoever believes in Him shall never experience the greatest of all terrors, spiritual death.

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The Greek is extremely powerful in verse 26, for our Lord deliberately used the double negative, a construction which intensifies with great emphasis that to which it is applied. Jesus could not grammatically have been more emphatic in stating that the believer, who is alive both physically and spiritually, can never experience loss of communion or fellowship as a spiritual entity, though his body may “become” dead.

We see, further, that Seventh-day Adventists have no warrant for the idea that death is a state of unconsciousness. The New Testament frequently indicates that the unregenerate man is already “dead,” but not even the Adventists would say that he was extinct or unconscious! Some instances of this are: Matthew 8:22, “Let the dead bury their dead”; John 5:25, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”; and Ephesians 2:1, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

Admittedly, in the New Testament death is compared with sleep, but this is recognized by Bible scholars generally as a grammatical metaphor. One does not develop a doctrine from a figure of speech, as conditional immortalists apparently have done, but upon the sound principles of biblical hermeneutics, contextual analysis, and linguistic exegesis. The application of these principles leads to the one conclusion that the Scripture unreservedly teaches, that eternal life is vastly different from “immortality”; although immortality will be bestowed upon the believer at the resurrection, in this life he already possesses “eternal life,” a spiritual quality of existence that will at length be united with the physical quality of incorruptibility, which the Bible speaks of as immortality, and “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2). A study of these words in any Greek lexicon, and of their use in the New Testament, will show that immortality and eternal life are neither identical nor synonymous. For certain Adventist writers therefore to treat these terms as interchangeable is clearly a linguistic impossibility.

3.2 *Timothy 1:10*: The Apostle Paul writes that God’s eternal purpose “is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” In this verse “life” (*zoe*) and “immortality” (*aphtharsian*) are clearly distinguished. Life has been bestowed upon the believer at the moment of regeneration by faith in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11–12); immortality is a future gift, to be bestowed upon the believer’s body at the second advent of our Lord, or as Paul expressed it, “This corruptible must put on incorruption (*aphtharsian*), and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53, *athanasian*).

Again, in Romans 2:7, the apostle clearly distinguishes between “eternal life” as a conscious quality of spiritual existence bestowed upon the believer as a gift; and “immortality,” which, in this connection in the New Testament, refers to the resurrection

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bodies of the saints or to the nature of God himself. Thus, God's Word clearly indicates the difference between "life" as spiritual existence and "immortality" as incorruptibility in a body like that of our risen Lord.

4. *Philippians 1:21–24*: "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

Seventh-day Adventists say here:

Of course it will be better to be with Christ. But why, it must be asked, should we conclude [from this remark] that the apostle expects, immediately upon death, to go at once into the presence of Christ? The Bible does not say so. It merely states his desire to depart, and be with Christ. One might reason that the implication is to the effect that being with Christ would be immediately on his departure. But it must be admitted that such is not a necessary implication, and it certainly is not a definite statement of the text. In this particular passage, Paul does not tell us when he will be with his Lord. In other places he uses an expression similar to one in this passage. For instance, he says, "The time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). The Greek word used in these two texts, *analuo*, is not used very often in the Greek New Testament, but the word has the meaning "to be loosened like an anchor." It is a metaphor drawn from the loosened moorings preparatory to setting sail.⁴⁴

Now, of all the texts in the New Testament on the state of the believer after the death of his body, this one alone gives us Paul's mind on the subject, so we need to pay strict attention to what he says. In the main, Seventh-day Adventists support their arguments with Old Testament passages, most of which, I maintain, are taken out of context while ignoring metaphorical usages, implications, or deductions. To treat literally such words as *sleep*, *death*, and *destroy* is, I feel, unwarranted. However, in the New Testament, when faced with a positive statement like this one by the Apostle Paul, it seems that they refuse to be literal and insist upon metaphors, deductions, and implications. They seem unwilling to accept the apostle's statement at face value. The noted Adventist author F. D. Nichol, in his book *Answers to Objections*, states that if Philippians 1:21–24 were the only passage about the condition of man in death, he would be forced to acknowledge the accepted orthodox position. Nichol then attempts to strengthen his argument by taking texts out of context to "prove" that Paul does not mean what he most decidedly says.

⁴⁴ *Questions on Doctrine*, 527–528.

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With this thought in mind, let us examine the context and grammar of the apostle's statement, for it answers the Seventh-day Adventist contention.

In verse 21 Paul states that to continue to live is Christ and to die "is gain." Since Paul was ordained to preach the Word of God to the Gentiles while enjoying fellowship with the living Christ, what would he gain by death or unconsciousness? According to the Adventist idea, fellowship with Christ would end and Paul would merely go to sleep until the resurrection. This argument violates both context and grammar.

Verse 23 is grammatically uncomplicated. It is a series of coordinate statements tied together by the conjunctions *kai* and *de*. The phrase "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (*esi to analusai kai sun Christo einai*) is grammatically devastating to the Seventh-day Adventist position. The preposition *eis* plus the definite article *to* shows "true purpose or end in view"—the strong desire that causes Paul's dilemma. Both infinitives (*analsai* and *einai*) have one construction—they are used with one definite article—and so are one thought, one grammatical expression: literally, "my desire is 'to depart and to be with Christ.'" In simple English, Paul's one desire has a twofold object: departure and being with Christ! If departure did not mean his immediately being with Christ, another construction would have been employed. It therefore seems impossible that soul-sleep was in the mind of the apostle since he desired to depart from his body and to spiritually enjoy the presence of his Lord. The Second Advent could not have been in view in this passage, for the context indicates that Paul expected death—and instantaneous reunion with Christ—*then*, not at the resurrection. There would have been no need of his staying to instruct the Philippians (v. 24) if he were speaking of the Second Advent, for they would all be glorified together and no longer in need of His presence to strengthen them. Most translators and recognized Greek authorities contend that Philippians 1:21–24 teaches the historical position of the Christian church, i.e., the conscious presence of the believer with Christ at the death of the body.

As quoted above, the Adventists, in common with all conditional immortalists, say, "Why ... should we conclude [from this remark] that the apostle expects immediately upon death to go at once into the presence of Christ? The Bible does not say so. It merely states his desire to depart and [to] be with Christ." We answer that the context of the chapter, the grammatical construction of the verse, and every grammar book on New Testament Greek usage teaches that from the construction utilized the apostle expected to go at once into the presence of his Lord. Nevertheless the Adventists insist, "The Bible does not say so. It merely states his desire to depart and [to] be with Christ." This statement is not accurate, it is not exegetically sound, and it will not stand the test of contextual criticism. It is only an attempt, I believe, to justify a doctrine that is not supported by the Word of God.

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In reply to the Adventist statement, “In this particular passage, Paul does not tell us when he will be with his Lord,” we point out that the apostle categorically states that his desire is “to depart.” If this departure did not mean immediate presence with Christ, he would have used a different grammatical construction, as previously noted; but as it stands, it can have no other meaning. In the face of these facts, Seventh-day Adventists disregard the preponderance of historical scholarship in favor of the doctrine of “soul-sleep.”

5. 1 *Thessalonians* 4:13–18: “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

This final passage, I believe, refutes the Adventist teaching on the intermediate state of the dead. It is marked by explicit emphasis of construction in the Greek and cannot be ignored by any serious student of the language.

The key is the preposition *sun*, which carries the primary meaning of “together with.” In verse 14, the Holy Spirit tells us that God intends to bring with Him (*sun auto*), that is, with Jesus at His second advent, believing Christians who have experienced physical death. The physical state of their bodies is described as “sleep,” a common metaphor in the New Testament. In every instance where the word “sleep” is used to describe death, it always refers to the body and cannot be applied to the soul, especially since “sleep” is never used with reference to the soul. This fact Seventh-day Adventists seem to overlook.

The second use of *sun* is in verse 17, which tells us that believers who survive to the coming of the Lord will be caught up together with them (*sun autois*), that is, with the dead in Christ (*oi nekroi en Christo*) to meet the Lord in the air. Here again, *sun* has no meaning other than “together with,” a fact most difficult for Seventh-day Adventists to explain.

The last use of the preposition *sun* is also in verse 17: “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (*sun kurio*). It is quite obvious, therefore, that at the second advent of Christ, those who at death departed to be spiritually with the Lord (*Philippians* 1:21–24) *return* with Him or “together with” Him to claim their resurrected, immortal bodies. Simultaneously, their corrupting bodies in the graves, spoken of as “asleep,” are instantly metamorphosed

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or changed and reunited with the returning personalities. This fact is consistently emphasized by continual use of the preposition *sun*, “together with.” Since the preposition *sun* means “together with” both times in verse 17, grammatically it cannot mean something altogether different in the same context and parallel usage of verse 14. Therefore, if at Christ’s advent our bodies are to go with Him physically (v. 16), it is obvious that the saints who preceded us in death have been with Him from the moment of death, since they accompany Him in His return (v. 14).

A final grammatical point is the Holy Spirit’s use of *nekroi*, which throughout the New Testament refers primarily to the physical body of man, and only metaphorically to the soul. We see, then, that the corpses (*nekroi*) of the physically dead saints are to be raised and united with their returning souls (v. 14). Not once does the context or grammar indicate that the souls of departed believers are “asleep.” Instead, it categorically states that they are “with Jesus” or returning “together with” Jesus.

The great hope of the believer is the joy of personal union with the Lord, and this union, the Apostle Paul tells us, takes place at the death of the body. That this has been the position of the large majority of the Christian church since the times of the apostles, the Adventists have never denied. In 1 Thessalonians 4, the Apostle Paul was giving comfort to people who were mourning for departed loved ones; and his words carry the undeniable conclusion that they are not “dead” in the usual pagan sense. Although physically dead, they are spiritually alive and with Christ, awaiting the day when they will return “together with him” (v. 14) to claim their inheritance of completion, physical immortality, or incorruptibility.

II. “Soul” and “Spirit”

For a fuller treatment of Adventist teaching on soul-sleep, we must discuss briefly the Bible’s use of “soul” and “spirit.” In the Old Testament, the words “soul” and “spirit” are the Hebrew *nephesh* and *ruach*. In the New Testament they are the Greek *psuche* and *pneuma*. Although in the Old Testament *nephesh* and *ruach* frequently refer only to the principle of life in both men and animals, in many other places they mean the intellectual and spiritual nature of man. Such verses as Isaiah 57:16, Zechariah 12:1, Isaiah 55:3, and Genesis 35:18⁴⁵ belie the Adventists’ criterion for determining the spiritual nature of man.

⁴⁵ “For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made” (Isaiah 57:16); “The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him” (Zechariah 12:1); “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isaiah 55:3); “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin” (Genesis 35:18).

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On page 522 of *Questions on Doctrine*, the Adventists list eight Scripture passages about death to show that at the death of the body, the intellect, will, and spirit of man (*nephesh* and *ruach*) lapse into unconsciousness pending the resurrection. However, seven of these are from the Old Testament and each refers to the body. Adventists lean strongly on the book of Ecclesiastes, especially 9:5–6, to substantiate their doctrine. But Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us that upon the death of the body, “the spirit [*ruach*] shall return unto God.” Unlike the mere principle of life in the animals, man possesses a cognizant, immaterial nature created in God’s image.⁴⁶

It is a basic Christian principle, with which Adventists agree, that the Old Testament must be interpreted by the New Testament, and not the reverse. However, where conditional immortality is involved, Adventists do not follow this principle. The New Testament teaches that the immaterial nature of man (soul and spirit) is separate from the body (Matthew 10:28; Luke 8:55; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 16:3),⁴⁷ and also that it is independent of man’s material form and departs from that form at death to go either into the presence of the Lord (Philippians 1:23) or into a place of punishment (Luke 16). In Acts 7:59, Stephen committed his spirit (*pneuma*) into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. This establishes the fact that the immaterial nature of man is independent of his body. At the same time, the Scripture tells us, “He [Stephen] fell asleep” in death; that is, his physical body took on the appearance of “sleep.” But he as a unit did not die; he merely experienced separation of the soul from the body, and he went to be with the Lord, into whose hands he had committed his spiritual nature.

In Luke 23:46, the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” This verse would be meaningless if it applied only to the “breath of Jesus.” The classic example of the penitent thief, who in his last moments believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, is proof that eternal life is a quality including conscious existence. It does not terminate with the death of the physical but continues in never-ending personal fellowship with our Lord. “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (v. 43) is the guarantee of the Son of

⁴⁶ It is almost universally agreed among biblical scholars that Ecclesiastes portrays Solomon’s apostasy and is therefore questionable for determining doctrine. It sketches man’s life “under the sun” and reveals the hopelessness of the soul apart from God.

⁴⁷ “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28); “And her spirit came again, and she rose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat” (Luke 8:55); “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23); “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12); “And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea” (Revelation 16:3).

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God that those who trust Him will never be separated from His presence and fellowship. Seventh-day Adventists, in company with other conditional immortalists, attempt to explain this by reading the text with different punctuation: "Verily, I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise." The reason is that Christ's statement calls into serious question their doctrine of soul-sleep. Moreover, Adventists seem to overlook the important fact that whenever Jesus used the words, "Verily I say unto you," He never qualified them because qualification was unnecessary. It would have been redundant for Jesus to say, "Verily I say unto you, that is, today I am saying unto you." By this type of interpretation, the Adventists violate the plain sense of one of Christ's common expressions of emphasis.

In Matthew 17:3, we see Moses and Elijah with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. We know that Moses died (Deuteronomy 34:5), and Elijah was translated (2 Kings 2:11). However, it *was* Moses who was communing with our Lord. Since the Scripture nowhere states that Moses had been raised from the dead for this occasion (Adventists attempt to teach this from the book of Jude, where such an assertion is not made), it is evident that the soul of Moses appeared to our Lord. Thus, conscious existence is a necessary predicate of the intermediate state.

It is the strong conviction of mine, based upon Scripture, that the doctrine of soul-sleep cannot stand in the light of God's revelation. Perhaps the reader will think that there has been too much space given to the meanings of words and the grammar of the Greek New Testament. However, this is most essential because the crux of Adventist argument, it seems to me, is a denial of the meaning of terms in their context. For example, they say:

There is nothing in the word *psuche* [soul] itself that even remotely implies a conscious entity that is able to survive the death of the body. And there is nothing in the Bible use of the word indicating that the Bible writers held any such belief. ... There is nothing inherent in the word *pneuma* [spirit] by which it may be taken to mean some supposed conscious entity of man capable of existing apart from the body, nor does the usage of the word with respect to man in the New Testament in any way imply such a concept. ... A careful study of all the adjectives used in Scripture to qualify the word "spirit" as applied to man, indicates that not one even remotely approaches the idea of immortality as one of the qualities of the human "spirit."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, 514, 517–518.

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As demonstrated in Matthew 10:28, Jesus Christ apparently believed and taught that the soul was more than “body and breath,” which Seventh-day Adventism teaches, for He said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”

Seventh-day Adventist writers charge that orthodox theologians have been overly dogmatic about the nature of man, while Adventists have maintained a guarded reserve. But Adventists have been equally dogmatic in denouncing the orthodox position. To be dogmatic one should have a sound, scholarly basis for his dogmatism, and such a basis exegetically speaking is conspicuously absent from the historical position of conditional immortalists. As mentioned above, Adventists generally confuse “immortality” with “eternal life.” We quite agree that “a careful study of all the adjectives used in Scripture to qualify the word ‘spirit’ as applied to man, indicates that not one even remotely approaches the idea of immortality,” as our Adventist brethren have stated. But as we have shown, “immortality” refers only to the resurrection body of the saints and to the nature of God himself. Therefore, since the saints are to be clothed with their resurrection bodies at the Second Advent, they do not now possess “immortality.” For Adventists to confuse “immortality” with “eternal life” and then to argue that “immortality” means “eternal life” and is never applied to the spirit is logical and theological error.

The question of soul-sleep, however, should cause no serious division between Christians since it does not affect the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith or the salvation of the soul. It is merely an area of theological debate and has no direct bearing upon any of the great doctrines of the Bible. The ground of fellowship is not the condition of man in death but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the love He commanded us to have one for another (John 13:34–35). Seventh-day Adventists are welcome to hold this doctrine, but when one is faced with such concrete Old Testament instances as Samuel’s appearance to Saul (2 Samuel 28:18–19) and such New Testament accounts as those given by the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 5:8), “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” or (Philippians 1:23) “to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,” it is difficult to see how our Adventist brethren can sufficiently substantiate their claim for the “sleep of the soul.”

III. Hell and Punishment as taught in New Testament Greek

The grammar of the Greek New Testament teaches unquestionably the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment. Nowhere is this more pointedly brought out than in the following passages:

1. *Matthew 5:22 and 10:28*: “Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire,” and “Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

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In both passages the Greek word *gehenna* portrays a place of punishment for the unsaved. *Gehenna* originally meant the Valley of Hinnom, a garbage dump that smoldered perpetually outside Jerusalem. The rabbis believed that punishment after death could be likened to *gehenna* and often threatened their people with punishment after death. The Lord Jesus Christ, however, pointed out to the unbelieving Jews that those who rejected Him could look forward to everlasting *gehenna*. In Matthew 10:28, He coupled *gehenna* with *apolesai*, which Thayer's Greek lexicon defines as "to be delivered up to eternal misery." *Gehenna*, then, symbolizes eternal separation and conscious punishment for the spiritual nature of the unregenerate man. This eternity of punishment is also taught in the Old Testament; e.g., "Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched" (Isaiah 66:24).

2. 2 *Thessalonians* 1:8–9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

From the context, "everlasting destruction" is to be that of "flaming fire," visited upon those who "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The heart of the problem here is the meaning of the word *destruction*, which the Adventists claim is reduction to a state of nonexistence (*Questions on Doctrine*, 14). As a matter of fact, the Greek word *olethros* used here has the clear meaning of "ruining." (For this and the following lexical studies, any standard New Testament Greek lexicon or grammar bears out the meanings presented here.) We see then, that everlasting destruction or "ruination" is the lot of those who know not God. Many people who are not well versed in Greek try to make "destruction" synonymous with "annihilation." This does violence to New Testament Greek, which supports no such concept. A common illustration will show the fallacy of this idea.

In the course of her work, a housewife may change a light bulb. What happens if it drops to the floor and breaks? It is, of course, "destroyed," but no one would say that it had been annihilated, for there is a difference between the function of an object and its nature. The function of the bulb is to give light. When broken, its function is destroyed, but the glass remains, although in fragments, and so does the metal base. Although the bulb has been "ruined" or "destroyed," it certainly has not been "reduced to nothing."

The Bible teaches that unregenerate mankind will suffer the eternal wrath of God and must undergo destruction and ruin of their original function which was "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." But the human spirit, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27), remains intact, a spiritual entity of eternal existence, capable of enduring eternally the righteous and just Judge.

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3. *Revelation 20:10*: “The devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night into the everlasting of the everlasting” (literal translation).

The root meaning of the Greek word *basanizo* is “to torment, to be harassed, to torture or to vex with grievous pain,” and is used throughout the New Testament to denote great conscious pain and misery, never annihilation or cessation of consciousness. The reader who wishes to pursue this point may look up the following verses where this word is used: Matthew 8:6, 29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28; Revelation 14:10–11. In each place, *basanizo* means conscious “torment.” In Revelation 14:10–11, speaking of the followers of the Beast, unmistakably it means torment or punishment, everlasting or never-ceasing.

In Revelation 20:10, Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are described as tormented (*basanizo thesontai*) “day and night into the everlasting of the everlasting.” So if language means anything at all, in these contexts alone the theory of annihilation or, as the Adventists say, the final destruction of the wicked, is itself annihilated.

4. *John 3:36*: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Our fourth and final grammatical point relative to the doctrine of annihilation is made by coupling Romans 2:8–9 and Revelation 14:10 with John 3:36. Jesus tells us that the one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ already has everlasting life (present tense); and then, of one who “believes not the Son,” he states that he “shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” The Greek word *menei*, here translated *abide*, appears several times in the New Testament. It carries the idea of continuous action (see John 1:33; 2:12; 8:31; 15:9). Thus, in John 3:36 the Holy Spirit says that the wrath of God continually abides on the one who “believeth not the Son.” Comparing this with Romans 2:8–9, we see that those who do not obey the truth but do evil are the objects of God’s wrath, which Revelation 14:10–11 describes as eternal. “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God ... and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night.”

Orges, translated “wrath,” appears in each of the verses cited, so there can be no doubt that the same subject is being discussed. It is apparent then that, far from the comparatively blissful prospect of total annihilation, those who “have not the Son of God have not life,”⁴⁹ and “the wrath of God continues upon them.”⁵⁰ God’s wrath even now

⁴⁹ I.e., personal communion or fellowship with Christ. Spiritual death is the opposite of eternal life in that the soul is deprived of such communion or fellowship and is conscious of it.

⁵⁰ Death (spiritual), far from being unconsciousness, is eternal conscious endurance of God’s just wrath.

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hangs like the sword of Damocles over the heads of those who deny Jesus Christ. It will strike when the rebellious soul goes into eternity and appears before the bar of God's eternal justice.

Seventh-day Adventists should not be ostracized because they cling to this doctrine, since they believe that an undetermined period of punishment will elapse before the actual ultimate destruction of the wicked with Satan and his host.

Dr. Francis Pieper, the great Lutheran scholar and author of the monumental *Christian Dogmatics*, states my views in essence when he says:

Holy Scripture teaches the truth of an eternal damnation so clearly and emphatically that one cannot deny it without, at the same time, rejecting the authority of Scripture. Scripture parallels the eternal salvation of the believers and the eternal damnation of the unbelievers. Whoever therefore denies the one must, to be consistent, deny the other (Matthew 25:46). We find the same juxtaposition and antithesis in other passages of Scripture. This parallelism proves that the term *eternity* in the sense of limited duration as sometimes used in Holy Writ, is inapplicable here. We must take the predicate eternal in its proper or strict sense, a sense of *sine fine* in all Scripture texts that use it to describe the duration and the penalties of the wicked in yonder life (see 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 18:8; Mark 3:29). ... The objections raised in all ages to the endlessness of the infernal punishment are understandable; for the thought of a never-ending agony of rational beings fully realizing their distressing plight is so appalling that it exceeds comprehension. But all objections are based on the false principle that it is proper and reasonable to make our human sentiments and judgments the measure of God's essence and activity.

This is the case in particular with those who contend that an everlasting punishment of a part of mankind does not agree with the unity of God's world plan, or that it is compatible neither with divine love nor with divine justice, who accordingly substitute for eternal damnation eventual salvation by gradual improvement in the next life, or an immediate or later annihilation of the wicked. Against such views we must maintain the general principle that God's essence, attributes, and actions exceed our comprehension, that we can therefore not know *a priori* but only from God's revelation in His Word what agrees or conflicts with God's essence and attributes. The nature of eternal damnation consists in eternal banishment from the sight of God or, in other words, in being forever excluded from communion with God. ... To illustrate the terrible agony setting in with this banishment from the sight of God, the dogmatician points to the agony of the fish removed from its element. But there is this difference; the fish that is removed from

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its element soon dies, whereas the man who is banished from communion with God must by God's judgment live on, "is guilty of eternal judgment" (Mark 3:29).⁵¹

Seventh-day Adventists would do well to heed Dr. Pieper's observation as well as the testimony of the Christian church generally for the last two thousand years. But most important, they should heed the teaching of the Word of God that the soul of man, whether regenerate or unregenerate, exists after the death of the body. The justice of God makes everlasting punishment for the unregenerate and everlasting life for the saved to be two sides of one coin—God's justice and God's love. We believe the Bible clearly teaches that there is neither authority nor warrant for the doctrines of conditional immortality and annihilation. God grant in the fullness of His wisdom that none of His children will persist in setting up their standards as the criterion to determine His perfect righteousness. It is my opinion that Seventh-day Adventists have done just this; first by predicating that a God of love would not eternally punish a conscious being, and second by attempting to force the Scriptures into their frame of thought while seeming to ignore context, hermeneutics, and exegesis. Their fellow Christians can only pray that they may soon be led to embrace the historical position of the church, which is the antithesis of the sleep of the soul and the annihilation of the wicked.

The Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and the Mark of the Beast

Certainly the most distinctive doctrine promulgated by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, and one of the two from which they derive their name, is the Seventh-day Sabbath. How Adventists came to hold the Sabbath as the true day of worship, and why they continue to champion it and jealously urge it upon all who worship on Sunday, provides the key to understanding their psychological and theological motivations.

I. The Sabbath or the Lord's Day

Seventh-day Adventists from the beginning have always attempted to equate the Sabbath with the Lord's Day. Their principal method for accomplishing this is to link Mark 2:28 with Revelation 1:10, and thus to undercut one of the strongest arguments against their position, i.e., the Lord's Day as opposed to Sabbath observance.

They reason that since "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27–28), when John says he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10), the Sabbath and the Lord's Day must be the same! The weakness of their position is that they base their argument on an English translation instead of on the Greek original. When one reads the

⁵¹ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d. (reprint), 3:544–555.

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second chapter of Mark and the first chapter of Revelation in Greek, he sees that there is no such interpretation inherent in the grammatical structure. The Greek of Mark 2:28 clearly indicates that Christ did not mean that the Sabbath was His possession (which the Adventists would like to establish); rather, He was saying that as Lord of all He could do as He pleased on the Sabbath. The Greek is most explicit here.

Nothing could be clearer from both the context and the grammar. In Revelation 1:10, the Greek is not the genitive of possession, which it would have to be in order to make *te-kuriake* (the Lord's) agree with *hermera* (day). John did not mean that the Lord's Day was the Lord's possession, but rather that it was the day dedicated to Him by the early church, not in accordance with Mosaic law, but in obedience to our Lord's commandment of love.

We may certainly assume that if the Sabbath had meant so much to the writers of the New Testament, and if, as Adventists insist, it was so widely observed during the early centuries of the Christian church, John and the other writers of Scripture would have equated it with the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. Scripture and history testify that they did not, and Adventists have, therefore, little scriptural justification for their Sabbatarianism.

A. Testimony of the Fathers⁵²

The church Fathers provide a mass of evidence that the first day of the week, not the seventh, is the Lord's Day. Some of this evidence is here submitted for the reader's consideration. In company with the overwhelming majority of historians and scholars, we believe that not only the New Testament but the following citations refute Sabbatarianism. We have yet to see any systematic answer to what the Christian church has always believed.

1. *Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch*, in the year AD 110, wrote: "If, then, those who walk in the ancient practices attain to newness of hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but fashioning their lives after the Lord's Day on which our life also arose through Him, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher."

2. *Justin Martyr* (100–165): "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place and memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. ... Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness in matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead."

⁵² Early Church Fathers, <http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/>.

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3. *The Epistle of Barnabas* (between 120 and 150): “Your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot endure’ (Isaiah 1:13). You perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me but that which I had made in giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is a beginning of another world. Wherefore also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, a day also in which Jesus rose from the dead.”
4. *Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons* (about 178): “The mystery of the Lord’s resurrection may not be celebrated on any other day than the Lord’s Day.”
5. *Bardaisan* (born 154): “Wherever we be, all of us are called by the one name of the Messiah, namely Christians and upon one day, which is the first day of the week, we assemble ourselves together and on the appointed days we abstain from food.”
6. *Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage* (200–258): “The Lord’s Day is both the first and the eighth day.”
7. *Eusebius* (about 315): “The churches throughout the rest of the world observe the practice that has prevailed from the apostolic tradition until the present time so that it would not be proper to terminate our fast on any other day but the resurrection day of our Saviour. Hence, there were synods and convocations of our bishops on this question and they unanimously drew up an ecclesiastical decree which they communicated to churches in all places—that the mystery of the Lord’s resurrection should be celebrated on no other than the Lord’s day.”
8. *Peter, Bishop of Alexandria* (about 300): “We keep the Lord’s Day as a day of joy because of Him who arose thereon.”
9. *Didache of the Apostles* (about 70–75): “On the Lord’s own day, gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks.”
10. *The Epistle of Pliny* (about 112, addressed to the Emperor Trajan): “They [the Christians] affirmed ... that the whole of their crime or error was that they had been wont to meet together on a fixed day before daylight and to repeat among themselves in turn a hymn to Christ as to a god and to bind themselves by an oath (*sacramentum*). ... These things duly done, it had been their custom to disperse and to meet again to take food—of an ordinary and harmless kind. Even this they had ceased to do after my edict, by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden the existence of societies.”

Thus it appears that from apostolic and patristic times, the Christian church observed the Lord’s Day or the first day of the week; further, the Jewish Sabbath, in the words of Clement of Alexandria (about 194) was “nothing more than a working day.”

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In their zeal to establish the authority of the Sabbath, Adventists either reject contrary evidence as unauthentic (and so they conflict with the preponderance of scholastic opinion), or they ignore the testimony of the early church. Although they seem unaffected by the evidence, the fact remains that the Christian church has both apostolic and historical support for observing the Lord's Day in place of the Sabbath.

B. "Authoritative Quotations"

Recently the Adventist radio program *Voice of Prophecy* circulated a thirty-one-page pamphlet entitled *Authoritative Quotations on the Sabbath and Sunday*. In it they quoted "leading" Protestant sources to "prove" that Sunday usurped the Sabbath and is a pagan institution imposed by Constantine in AD 321.

However, many of the sources quoted actually establish what the Adventists flatly deny; i.e., that the Seventh-day Sabbath is not the Lord's Day or the first day of the week, but is, in fact, the seventh day as its name indicates.

Since the Adventists are willing to quote these authorities to buttress their position in one area, surely they will give consideration to contradictory statements by these same authorities in another:

1. "The Lord's Day did not succeed in the place of the Sabbath. ... The Lord's Day was merely an ecclesiastical institution. ... The primitive Christians did all manner of work upon the Lord's Day" (Bishop Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor Dubitantium*, Part 1, Book 2, Chapter 2, Rule 6, Sections 51, 59).
2. "The observance of the Lord's Day [Sunday] is founded not on any command of God, but on the authority of the church" (*Augsburg Confession of Faith*, quoted in *Catholic Sabbath Manual*, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 10).
3. "But they err in teaching that Sunday has taken the place of the Old Testament Sabbath and therefore must be kept as the seventh day had to be kept by the children of Israel" (J. T. Mueller, *Sabbath or Sunday*, 15–16).
4. "They [the Catholics] allege the Sabbath changed into Sunday, the Lord's Day, contrary to the Decalogue as it appears; neither is there any example more boasted than the changing of the Sabbath Day" (Martin Luther, *Augsburg Confession of Faith*, Article 28, Paragraph 9).
5. "Although it [Sunday] was in primitive times and differently called the Lord's Day or Sunday, yet it was never denominated the Sabbath, a name constantly appropriate

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to Saturday, or the seventh day both by sacred and ecclesiastical writers” (Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary*, 1850, 537).

6. “The notion of a formal substitution by apostolic authority of the Lord’s Day [meaning Sunday] for the Jewish Sabbath (or the first for the seventh day). ... The transference to it, perhaps in a spiritualized form of the Sabbath obligation established by promulgation of the fourth commandment, has no basis whatever either in Holy Scripture or in Christian antiquity” (Sir William Smith and Samuel Cheetham, *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, Volume 2, 182, article on the Sabbath).

7. “The view that the Christian’s Lord’s Day or Sunday is but the Christian Sabbath deliberately transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week does not indeed find categorical expression till a much later period. ... The Council of Laodicea (AD 364) ... forbids Christians from Judaizing and resting on the Sabbath Day, preferring the Lord’s Day and so far as possible resting as Christians” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1899 ed., Volume 23, 654).

Thus the Adventists have in effect destroyed their argument by appealing to authorities who state unequivocally that the first day of the week is the Lord’s Day and that it was observed by the early Christian church from the time of the apostles.

It should also be carefully noted that in their “Authoritative Quotations” the Adventists overlook the fact that nearly all the authorities argue forcefully for the Lord’s Day as the first day of the week, and state that legal observance of the Sabbath terminated at the cross (Colossians 2:16–17). The Adventists also, in their compilation of quotations, appeal even to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon), and to Fulton Ousler, a Roman Catholic laywriter. The Mormons are a non-Christian cult, a fact which the Adventists admit; and Ousler, a layman, hardly represents the position of Rome.

On page thirteen of this same pamphlet, the Adventists make misleading use of the ellipsis. The following is a direct quotation as it appears:

Sunday (*dies-solis*, of the Roman calendar, day of the sun, because dedicated to the sun), was adopted by the early Christians as a day of worship. The sun of Latin adoration they interpreted as the “sun of righteousness.” ... No regulations for its observance are laid down in the New Testament, nor, indeed, is its observance even enjoined (Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1891 ed., Volume 4, Article on Sunday).

Now here is the paragraph as it appears in the *Encyclopedia*:

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Sunday (*dies-solis*, of the Roman Calendar, day of the sun, because dedicated to the sun), was adopted by the early Christians as a day of worship. The sun of Latin adoration they interpreted as “the sun of righteousness.” SUNDAY WAS EMPHATICALLY THE WEEKLY FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AS THE JEWISH SABBATH WAS THE FEAST OF THE CREATION. IT WAS CALLED THE “LORD’S DAY,” AND UPON IT THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH ASSEMBLED TO BREAK BREAD (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). No regulations for its observance are laid down in the New Testament, nor, indeed, is its observance even enjoined; YET CHRISTIAN FEELING LED TO THE UNIVERSAL ADOPTION OF THE DAY, IN IMITATION OF APOSTOLIC PRECEDENCE. IN THE SECOND CENTURY ITS OBSERVANCE WAS UNIVERSAL. (Sentences in capital letters were omitted by the writer of the Adventist pamphlet on page 22. This mutilation of authoritative sources first occurs in *The Present Truth*, Volume 1, Number 9, published in the 1880s. So our Adventist brethren apparently failed to check the quotation’s validity.)

Such use of the ellipsis is not uncommon in certain Seventh-day Adventists’ writings in connection with the Sabbath, the Lord’s Day, etc., and we regret that they resort to it in order to substantiate their position.

In this pamphlet they quote Martin Luther, despite the well-known fact that Luther violently opposed Sabbatarianism. His refutation of his Sabbatarian colleague, Dr. Carlstadt, is a monument to his apologetic genius. Thus, to quote Luther in order to support the doctrine of the Seventh-day Sabbath suggests that Adventists are not familiar with Luther’s theology.

We admire the boldness of our Adventist brethren in their claims for the Sabbath, but their boldness is misplaced and leads to a distorted concept of the value of the law of God, for when a person believes and teaches that “the fourth commandment is the greatest commandment in the Decalogue,” it is apparent that he has no understanding of the spirit of the law. Volume 4 of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* represents the reasons why the Christian church observes the Lord’s Day in preference to the Sabbath, and also clearly states (2629–2634) the Seventh-day Adventist position.⁵³ The Adventists contend: “According to church history the seventh-day Sabbath was observed by the early church, and no other day was observed as a Sabbath during the first two or three centuries (2633).”

⁵³ Bible Question Column in *Signs of the Times* (January 8, 1952).

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This sentence epitomizes the Adventist propensity for overstating their case; i.e., attempting to read “Sabbath” into “Lord’s Day,” which all leading authorities confute as we have seen.

II. Primary Anti-Sabbatarian Texts

In more than one place, the New Testament comments unfavorably upon the practice of any type of legalistic day-keeping. In fact, from the ascension of Christ on, the New Testament or early church observed the first day of the week or the Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10), as we have endeavored to show. Besides the passages that contrast the Lord’s Day with the Sabbath, the Apostle Paul—Hebrew of the Hebrews and Pharisee of the Pharisees, apart from our Lord, the outstanding New Testament authority—on the Law of Moses declared that the Sabbath as “the law” was fulfilled at the cross and was not binding upon the Christian (Colossians 2:16–17). Since the subject is so vast in scope, the reader is referred to the bibliography, especially to Dr. Louis Sperry Chafer’s *Grace*, and Norman C. Deck’s *The Lord’s Day or the Sabbath, Which?* These contain excellent refutations of Sabbatarianism. D. M. Canright in *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* also dealt exhaustively and ably with the Sabbath subject.

To narrow the issue down to simple analysis, we shall review the major New Testament texts that in context and in the light of syntactical analysis refute the Sabbatarian concept, and substantiate the historical position of the Christian church since the days of the apostles and the Fathers.

A. Colossians 2:13–17

Of all of the statements in the New Testament, these verses most strongly refute the Sabbatarian claim for observance of the Jewish Sabbath. Let us listen to the inspired counsel of Paul, not only the greatest of the apostles, but once a Pharisee whose passion for fulfilling the law outperformed that of the most zealous Seventh-day Adventist:

And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him. Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:13–17, RSV).

This translation, one of the best from the Greek text today, contains tremendously important teaching.

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First, we who were dead have been made alive in Christ and have been forgiven all trespasses and sins. We are free from the condemnation of the law in all its aspects, because Christ took our condemnation on the cross. As already observed, there are not two laws, moral and ceremonial, but one law containing many commandments, all perfectly fulfilled by the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Therefore,” the Apostle Paul boldly declares, “let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”

In the face of this clear teaching, Sabbatarians revert to their dual-law theory and argue that Paul is referring only to observance of the Jewish ceremonial law, not to the Sabbath which, they insist, is a moral precept because it is one of the Ten Commandments. We have seen, however, that the Ten Commandments are but a fragment of the moral law encompassed by the commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:9).

Sabbatarians overlook the mass of contradictory evidence and appeal to certain commentators who do not analyze the uses of the word *Sabbath*, or exegete the New Testament passages where the word occurs. Such commentators are Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Critical and Explanatory Commentary*; and Adam Clarke in his *Commentary*. If a commentator’s opinion is not in accord with sound exegesis, it is *only an opinion*, and the commentators named above make no grammatical or textual analysis of the second chapter of Colossians!

Many New Testament commentators try to retain the moral force of the Sabbath (although all of these transfer it to the first day of the week) because it is the subject of the fourth commandment. For this serious theological error there is no warrant in the New Testament. Sabbatarians fail to mention that all the commentators whom they cite repudiate the Sabbath, and most of them teach that the true Sabbath was the Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10), carried over by the early church from apostolic tradition as a memorial to redemption or the re-creation of mankind through the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. Adventists are therefore without historical or exegetical support when they make the Lord’s Day the same as the Sabbath.

With regard to this passage, Adventists maintain that since the word in Colossians 2:16 (*sabbaton*) is in the plural, it means the ceremonial Sabbaths, not the weekly Sabbath, which they contend is still in effect. However, their argument seems to be that Colossians 2:16–17 refers to Sabbaths and feast days that were shadows of things to come, and thus part of ceremonial laws; but that the Seventh-day Sabbath is not a shadow of redemption but a memorial of Creation and part of the moral law. The leading modern translations,

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following the best New Testament scholars, render Colossians 2:16 as “a Sabbath” or “a Sabbath day,” not “Sabbath days” as in the King James Version. Their reason for doing this is well stated by W. E. Vine:

Sabbaton or *sabbata* the latter the plural form, was transliterated from the Aramaic word, which was mistaken for a plural: hence the singular *sabbaton* was formed from it. ... In the epistles the only direct mentions are in Colossians 2:16 “a Sabbath day” (RV), which rightly has the singular ... where it is listed among things that were “a shadow of things to come”; i.e., of the age introduced at Pentecost, and in Hebrews 4:4–11 where the perpetual *sabbatismos* is appointed for believers. ... For the first three centuries of the Christian era the first day of the week was never confounded with the Sabbath; the confusion of the Jewish and Christian institutions was due to declension from apostolic teaching.⁵⁴

Supplementing Dr. Vine’s statement is the comment of M. R. Vincent:

Sabbath days (*sabbaton*), the weekly festivals revised correctly as day, the plural being used for the singular. See Luke 4:31 and Acts 20:7. The plural is only once used in the New Testament of more than a single day (Acts 17:2). In the Old Testament, the same enumeration of sacred seasons occurs in 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 2 Chronicles 31:3; Ezekiel 45:17; Hosea 2:11.⁵⁵

As Dr. Vincent points out, the revisers’ rendering of *sabbaton* in the singular accords with the use of the word throughout the New Testament. It is significant that in 56 of 60 occurrences in the New Testament, Adventists affirm that they refer to the *weekly* Sabbath; but in the sixtieth occurrence they maintain it does not, although all grammatical authorities contradict them.

With regard to Albert Barnes, whom the Adventists delight to quote because he agrees with their interpretation of Colossians 2, his comments are demolished by Dean Henry Alford, a truly great biblical exegete whom the Adventists also frequently quote. Wrote Dean Alford concerning Colossians 2:

Let no one therefore judge you (pronounce judgment of right or wrong over you, sit in judgment on you) ... in respect of feasts or new moon, or Sabbaths (i.e., yearly, monthly, or weekly celebrations). (The relative may refer either to the aggregate

⁵⁴ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), 311–313.

⁵⁵ M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (MacDill AFB, FL: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.), 2:494.

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of the observances mentioned, or to the last mentioned, i.e., the Sabbath. Or it may refer to all.)⁵⁶

After making significant comments on the grammar, Dean Alford went even further in his insistence that in verse seventeen, grammatically speaking, the Apostle Paul contrasts all the Jewish laws with their fulfillment in Christ, the former being a shadow, pointing forward to the real substance (*soma*), which was Christ.

Alford summed up his comments thus:

The blessings of the Christian covenant: These are the substance, and the Jewish ordinances the mere type of resemblance, as the shadow is of the living man. ... We may observe that if the ordinance of the Sabbath had been in any form of lasting obligation on the Christian church, it would have been quite impossible for the apostle to have spoken thus. The fact of an obligatory rest of one day, whether the seventh or the first, would have been directly in the teeth of his assertion here: The holding of such would have been still to retain the shadow, while we possess the substance. And no answer can be given to this by the transparent special-pleading, that he is speaking only of that which was Jewish in such observances: the whole argument being general, and the axiom of verse seventeen universally applicable.⁵⁷

We see that, from a grammatical standpoint, if the Adventists insist that Colossians 2:16 refers only to ceremonial Sabbaths, they run against the use of the word for weekly Sabbaths in the entire New Testament; and, as Alford points out, if "Sabbaths" be allowed, it must include all Sabbaths, weekly, monthly, or yearly. On the other hand, if Adventists admit the correction of the revisers and render Colossians 2:16 "a Sabbath day," its use in the New Testament still refers almost exclusively (see Acts 17:2) to the weekly Sabbath, which Adventists maintain is permanent, although Paul deliberately classes it with the penalty for violating the ordinances that Christ by His death nailed to the cross! (Colossians 2:14).

Dr. J. B. Lightfoot, an acknowledged authority on New Testament Greek, makes this interesting observation:

The word *sabbata* is derived from the Aramaic *sabbatha* (as distinguished from the Hebrew), and accordingly preserves the Aramaic termination of "a." Hence it was naturally declined as a plural noun, *sabbata*, *sabbaton*. The New Testament *sabbata*

⁵⁶ D. H. Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), 1299–1300.

⁵⁷ Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*, 1300.

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is only once used distinctively as more than a single day, and there the plurality of meaning is brought out by the attached numeral (Acts 17:2).⁵⁸

It is apparent, therefore, that the use of “Sabbath” in the New Testament refutes the Adventist contention that in Colossians 2 it means Sabbaths other than the weekly Sabbath of the Decalogue. Since it is impossible to retain the “shadow” while possessing the “substance” (Colossians 2:17), the Jewish Sabbath and the handwriting of ordinances “which was contrary to us” found their complete fulfillment in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Seventh-day Adventists are also deprived of the support of Albert Barnes, because he admits that if Paul had “used the word in the singular number, ‘the Sabbath,’ it would then of course have been clear that he meant to teach that that commandment had ceased to be binding and that a Sabbath was no longer to be observed.”⁵⁹

Since Barnes makes this admission, and since modern conservative scholarship establishes the singular rendering of “Sabbath” in the New Testament (see RSV, et al.), Adventists find even less support for their position.

We conclude our comments on this passage of Scripture by observing that in Numbers 28 and 29, which list the very “ordinances” referred to in Colossians 2:16–17, the Sabbath is grouped with burnt offerings and new moons (Numbers 28:1–15). Since these offerings and feasts have passed away as the shadow (*saka*), fulfilled in the substance (*soma*) of the cross of Christ, how can the Seventh-day Sabbath be retained? In the light of this Scripture alone, I contend that the argument for Sabbath observance collapses, and the Christian stands under “the perfect law of liberty,” which enables him to fulfill “the righteousness of the law” by the imperative of love.

B. Galatians 4:9–11

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain (RSV).

⁵⁸ D. H. Alford, *Commentary on Colossians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), 225.

⁵⁹ Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*, 229.

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Paul's epistle to the Galatians was primarily a massive theological effort to bolster the young church against the Judaizers who added to the gospel of grace "another gospel" (1:6), and sought to "pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:7).

Though steeped in Jewish lore and the law of Moses, Paul steadfastly opposed the Judaizers. The entire epistle to the Galatians is an apologetic against those who would seek to bring the Christian "under the law." After mentioning the errors into which the Galatian church had fallen, Paul, evidently with great disgust, remarks, "You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain." In the Greek the expression "days, and months, and seasons, and years," matches both the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the ordinances in Numbers 28 and 29, of which all Sabbaths are a principal part, and the ordinances mentioned in Colossians 2. Paul was familiar with the Septuagint and quoted it, and the law, including the weekly Sabbaths, was so cherished by the Judaizers of his day that its legalistic observance called forth his strong words. Adventists insist that Paul meant ceremonial feasts and yearly Sabbaths, not the weekly Sabbath; but Paul's language and the Septuagint translation of Numbers 28 and 29 refute their objections. It is one thing to interpret your way out of a verse when your interpretation is feasible; it is another to ignore grammar, context, and comparative textual analysis (hermeneutics) as our Adventist friends and others appear to do. To substantiate their interpretation of Paul's statements they do not practice exegesis (taking out of), but eisegesis (reading into) the texts.

After studying Seventh-day Adventist literature, it is my opinion that the overwhelming majority of Seventh-day Adventists do not actually consider themselves "under the law." I believe they fail to realize that by trying to enjoin Sabbath observance upon other members of the body of Christ, they are in serious danger of transgressing the gospel of grace. To them Paul says,

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ... Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith (Galatians 4:21; 3:23–26, RSV).

Bearing in mind that "the law" in its larger connotation includes the entire Pentateuch, it is apparent from Paul's language that one is "under the law" when he attempts to observe any part of it, because the Christian has been freed from the law. Seventh-day Adventists are doubtless Christians, saved by grace, but we do not find scriptural warrant for their attempt to enjoin the Sabbath upon their fellow believers.

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C. Romans 13:8–10

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (RSV).

It is really unnecessary to comment extensively upon the foregoing verses because they speak plainly for themselves.

The Greek word *pleroma*, translated respectively “fulfilled” and “fulfilling” in Romans 13:8–10, RSV, appears ninety times in the New Testament and has the same basic meaning. The Apostle Paul surely understood this term; since the Adventists confess the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, they must concede that the Holy Spirit guided his pen. Quoting from the Decalogue upon which the Adventists rely for perpetual Sabbath-keeping, Paul declares, “The commandments ... are summed up in this sentence, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” In verse eight the apostle declares, “He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law”; and since he quotes from the Decalogue as part of the law, the fourth commandment is also fulfilled, not by rigid observance of a given day, but by loving one’s neighbor as oneself! Since it is impossible in the Christian context to love one’s neighbor at all apart from loving God as the prerequisite, the issue is clear. The false teaching that love of one’s neighbor does not fulfill all the law of God comes from a failure to realize that our love for God and neighbor stems from God’s initiating act of love in Christ. This law of love is first enunciated in Leviticus 19:18, which our Lord coupled with the commandment to “love the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5), and stated that observance of those two commandments fulfilled “all the law and the prophets.”

While our Adventist brethren may seek to escape the implications of Colossians 2:14–17 and to explain away Galatians 4:9–11, in the present passage the Holy Spirit twice declares that love fulfills the law. They cannot exempt the Sabbath from this context without destroying the unity of the “Eternal Ten,” hence their dilemma.

In Galatians Paul also declares, “The whole law is fulfilled in one word. ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (5:14, RSV). So we see that Paul’s theology rested upon the imperative of love. Therefore, it is my conviction that the Holy Spirit, not the Christian church, is the authority for the nullification of all Sabbath-keeping. How any student of New Testament Greek could read the unmistakable language of the apostle and then exclude the Sabbath commandment from his argument passes my understanding.

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D. Romans 14:4–6, 10, 12–13

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Master is able to make him stand. One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. ... Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ... So each of us shall give account of himself to God. Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of a brother (RSV).

In this writer's opinion, and according to Romans 14, the Seventh-day Adventist is entitled to observe the Seventh-day Sabbath if he feels that this is what God desires. Further than this, the Holy Spirit adjures us not to "pass judgment" on our fellow Christians regarding such matters as observance of days and diet. I believe that Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Baptists, and Sabbatarians of other religious groups have the right to worship on the seventh day in the liberty wherein Christ has made us free. It is wrong and unchristian to discriminate against Sabbatarians merely because they "esteem" the Sabbath above the first day of the week, or the Lord's Day. I suggest it is no more legalistic for them to observe the seventh day out of conviction than it is for the Christian church to observe the first day. It is a matter of liberty and conscience.

If Seventh-day Adventists, however, would follow the biblical teaching of Romans 14 with regard to those who wish to observe Sunday, we would not have the conflict that has been generated by their dogmatic insistence that all should worship on the Sabbath. The sad fact is, however, that all Sabbatarians transgress the very counsels given by the Apostle Paul in the above cited passage.

Of course, Seventh-day Adventists feel that they are called upon to perpetuate or promulgate certain truths that they believe are found in the Word of God, and which they believe are to be emphasized in "these last days." Furthermore, they believe that the counsels of Ellen G. White emphasize the importance of these truths. Granting their basic premise that God has indeed spoken to them concerning Sabbath observance, it is easy to see the source of their zeal. But I feel that there is good evidence that the "Spirit of prophecy" is not what they claim; and their "special truths" have, to say the least, questionable theological origins. Non-Adventists reject the claims that they make for White, and merely because Adventists accept her counsel is no reason for other Christians to feel bound to do so. We repeat—the faith the Adventists place in "the Spirit of prophecy," which has endorsed their "special truths," sincere though they may be, does

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not entitle them to contradict the counsel of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Word of God. This I believe they have done. I could cite scores of references from contemporary Adventist writers who do indeed pass judgment upon their Christian brethren and upon the Christian church at large, because the latter do not observe the Seventh-day Sabbath. It is my opinion in these cases that they neglect the counsel of the Holy Spirit: "One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. ... Happy is he who has no reason to judge himself for what he approves ... for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Romans 14:5–6, 22–23, RSV).

By contending that other members of the body of Christ should recognize "the Spirit of prophecy," Seventh-day Adventists appear to juxtapose the "Spirit of prophecy" with the Holy Spirit who says, "Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of a brother" (v. 13).

There can be little doubt that the great majority of Christians who worship on Sunday would never have discriminated against the Seventh-day Adventists, had the latter not insisted upon "passing judgment" on first-day observance as opposed to Sabbath-keeping. Although motivated by the best intentions and sincere in faith, Adventists have nevertheless put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of fellow Christians by their rigid Sabbatarianism. It is indeed unfortunate that such a source of strife exists among Christians.

The fourteenth chapter of Romans is a masterpiece on the subject of Christian liberty, not only in diet but in worship, and in the context of all Paul's writings on the subject it appears that Adventists ignore the plain teaching of Scripture about the observance of days. We ask, should they not be more charitable in the light of 1 Corinthians 13? They would thus avoid opposition from their fellow Christians.

These four passages from the writings of Paul reflect the position of the historical Christian church from the times of the Fathers and the Reformers to the leading exegetical commentators of our day. The reader should remember that Adventist arguments, although buttressed by selected Bible passages (sometimes cited out of context), must be studied in the clear light of these four passages, which contain the comprehensive New Testament teaching on Sabbatarianism. The early Christian church met upon the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). The disciples received the Holy Spirit on the first day of the week; collections were taken for the saints on the first day of the week; and historical evidence establishes that the first day of the week was the Lord's Day, the memorial of the new creation in Christ Jesus that completely fulfilled the law in Christ.

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No amount of argument by Adventists can alter these facts, and if we believe the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is apparent that we must reject Sabbatarianism. We do not judge Seventh-day Adventists for their Sabbath observance, and they in turn should extend the same charity to their fellow Christians. Only in the recognition of the principles of Romans 14 can true unity in the body of Christ be realized. There can be no legislation of moral choice on the basis of “special revelation.” This we believe is the case in Seventh-day Adventism, for it was Ellen G. White’s “vision” confirming Joseph Bates’ “Seal of the Living God” concept as set forth in his pamphlet on the Sabbath that established Sabbatarianism in Seventh-day Adventism. The Bible must be the supreme court of appeal and authority, and the verdict of this court, it appears to me, invalidates the contentions of our Adventist friends.⁶⁰

III. Author’s Note on “The Mark of the Beast”

The subjects of the Seventh-day Sabbath and the mark of the beast already have been covered in sufficient detail. However, it is often charged that Adventists teach that salvation depends upon observance of the seventh day as Sabbath, and that the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16–17) rests upon all Sunday-keepers. For this reason, the record should be examined.

One ex-Adventist layman writes that there are “characteristic false doctrines of the sect ... [notably] the obligation of seventh-day Sabbath observance on the part of all professing Christians, the ‘mark of the beast’ for Sunday-keepers.” Now if this charge were correct, we too would doubt the possibility of fellowship with Adventists. But such is not the case. Ellen G. White on a number of occasions pointedly denied what is claimed to be the position of the Adventist denomination on this point. Wrote White:

No one has yet received the mark of the beast. Testing time is not yet come. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion. *None are condemned until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. ... Sunday-keeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol Sabbath.*⁶¹

In addition to this quotation, the Adventists have stated,

When Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall

⁶⁰ For further study on the issue see D. A. Carson, General Editor, *From Sabbath Day to Lord’s Day* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House).

⁶¹ *Questions on Doctrine*, 183–184.

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transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God.⁶²

To sum up, the Adventists declare,

God surely does not hold men accountable for truth that has not yet come to their knowledge and understanding. ... We hold the firm conviction that millions of devout Christians of all faiths throughout all past centuries, as well as those today who are sincerely trusting in Christ their Saviour for salvation and are following Him according to their best light, are unquestionably saved. Thousands of such went to the stake as martyrs for Christ and for their faith. Moreover, untold numbers of godly Roman Catholics will surely be included. God reads the heart and deals with the intent and understanding. ... Seventh-day Adventists interpret the prophecies relating to the beast, and the reception of his work, as something that will come into sharp focus just before the return of our Lord in glory. It is our understanding that this issue will then become a worldwide test.⁶³

The statement, then, that Seventh-day Adventists believe that anyone who is a Sunday-keeper has the mark of the beast or the mark of apostasy is made without regard to the facts. Why do these critics attempt to make it appear that Adventists believe that their fellow Christians are lost? The authoritative statements of this denomination are available for all to read. Doubtless some Seventh-day Adventist writers have gone contrary to the teaching of the denomination, but to indict the entire denomination for the excesses of a few is neither ethical nor Christian.

The Sanctuary, the Investigative Judgment, and the Scapegoat

The foundation of Seventh-day Adventism is its view of prophecy, which is of the historicist school of interpretation, a school that maintains that prophecy is to be understood in the light of consecutive fulfillment in history. The exaggeration of this idea led William Miller and his followers to teach that the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 were actually 2,300 years. Figuring from 457 BC, the now verified time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25), the Millerites thought that AD 1843 would be the date of the second advent of Jesus Christ. Miller and his followers, among whom were James and Ellen G. White and other prominent Seventh-day Adventists, understood “the sanctuary” of Daniel 8:14 to be the earth that would be cleansed by Christ at the “great and terrible Day of the Lord,” which they interpreted as the second advent of Christ. We have seen, however, that the Millerites were bitterly disappointed; and when Christ did

⁶² *Questions on Doctrine*, 178.

⁶³ *Questions on Doctrine*, 178, 184–185.

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not appear, Miller himself renounced the system and all resultant movements, including Seventh-day Adventism. But the early Seventh-day Adventists, relying upon the “vision” of Elder Hiram Edson, transferred the location of the sanctuary from the earth to heaven, and taught that in 1844 Christ went instead into the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven (which contemporary Seventh-day Adventists term the second phase of His ministry), there to review the cases of those deemed to be worthy of eternal life. This phase of our Lord’s ministry the Seventh-day Adventists call the “investigative judgment.” This unique theory is intended, I believe, to discipline Christians by the threat of impending judgment and condemnation upon those whose cases are decided upon unfavorably by our Lord. When concluded, the investigative judgment will usher in the second advent of Jesus Christ, according to the Seventh-day Adventist theology, and the devil, prefigured by the second or scapegoat of Leviticus 16 (Azazel), will bear away unto eternal destruction or annihilation his responsibility for causing sin to enter the universe.

James White, a stalwart Seventh-day Adventist leader, when first confronted with the doctrine of the investigative judgment, opposed it in *toto*, giving in substance the very arguments put forth by all subsequent ex-Seventh-day Adventists. And it was only after considerable time that James White finally acceded to the doctrine of the investigative judgment. There are many critics of Seventh-day Adventism who, when approaching the sanctuary, investigative judgment, and scapegoat concepts, deride and mock the early Adventists and their descendants for accepting such unsupported, extra-biblical theories, but derision is not the answer, and it should be remembered that Adventists hold these doctrines in sincerity. Therefore, if they are ever to be persuaded of the mistaken nature of their faith, in these areas at least, only the facts of Scripture and the guidance of the Holy Spirit will bring it about.

The view of Hiram Edson is, so far as this writer is concerned, an attempt to escape the terrible calamity that befell the Millerite movement and the disappointment and embarrassment that must have followed the failure of the Millerite prophecies and their interpretations of the book of Daniel. We shall confine ourselves in this short analysis to the salient points of the theological issues raised by these special teachings or doctrines of the Advent message. In the matter of prophetic interpretation, this writer is convinced that the Holy Spirit has wisely veiled from the prying eyes and intellect of man many great truths that will doubtless be revealed toward the end of the age. It is not for us to judge whether the preterist, historicist, or futurist schools of interpretation are correct, and we ought not to overly concern ourselves with when Christ is coming, whether before, during, or after the Great Tribulation. Rather, we ought to be concerned that He *is* coming, because His coming is indeed “the blessed hope” of the Christian church (Titus 2:13), which hope Adventists and non-Adventists alike who share the Christian message and faith anticipate with joy.

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~The heavenly sanctuary and investigative judgment teaching is foundational and an integral part of Adventist doctrine. They describe it in the “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” in the following words:

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 a 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.^{64~}

I. The Sanctuary

Since the Seventh-day Adventists believe that the sanctuary to be cleansed is in heaven (Daniel 8:14), which the Millerites identified as the earth (a regrettable early mistake), we might ask, *What is the purpose of the heavenly sanctuary and its cleansing? What are the Adventists really teaching?*

The book of Hebrews definitely sets forth a “heavenly sanctuary” of which Christ is the minister (Hebrews 8:1–2), and the writer of the epistle repeatedly contrasts the Lord Jesus Christ, our risen high priest, with the Aaronic priesthood. He shows that as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, Christ derives His authority from the power of “an endless

⁶⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Twenty-Seven Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 312. (These twenty-seven doctrines were published earlier in a special edition of the *Adventist Review*, 1981.)

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life" (Hebrews 7:16), and that He was both high priest and an offering on Calvary.⁶⁵ And this Adventists also emphasize.

It is futile, therefore, to argue that the word *sanctuary* does not apply to heaven or something of a heavenly nature, since the Scriptures teach that it does. But the Adventists' error is that they draw from the Scriptures' interpretations that cannot be substantiated by exegesis, but rest largely upon inference and deduction and are taken from theological applications of their own design.

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In their sanctuary teaching, the Adventists do indeed declare, in the words of Ellen G. White:

As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded.⁶⁶

Here we have the very heart of Seventh-day Adventist teaching relative to the expiation of sin, which is that the sins of believers have been transferred, deposited, or recorded in the heavenly sanctuary, and are now being dealt with in the investigative judgment.

Let us again listen to White:

In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; but the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin. It had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of the blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering for the congregation went into the most holy place with the blood and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, above the table of the law. Thus the claims of the law, which demanded the life of the sinner, were satisfied. Then in his character of mediator the priest took the sins upon himself, and, leaving the sanctuary, he bore with him the burden of Israel's guilt. At the door of the

⁶⁵ Hebrews 7:2, 4–7, 14, 16, 22, 25–26; 8:1–2, 6–8, 10; 9:2–12, 14, 23–24, 26–28; 10:1–10, 12, 19–21.

⁶⁶ *The Great Controversy*, 421–422.

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tabernacle he laid his hands upon the head of the scapegoat, confessed over him “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.” And as the goat bearing these sins was sent away, they were, with him, regarded as forever separated from the people.⁶⁷

White further stated, “Not until the goat had been thus sent away did the people regard themselves as freed from the burden of their sins.”⁶⁸

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The Adventist teaching is that Christ as our high priest transferred the sins of believers (i.e., the record of sins, in Adventist thinking) to the heavenly sanctuary, which will be finally cleansed at the conclusion of the great Day of Atonement, the investigative judgment having been concluded. Then the cases of all the righteous having been decided, their sins will be blotted out, followed by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. White made it clear that the sin transferred to the sanctuary in heaven would remain there until the conclusion of the investigative judgment and the subsequent cleansing of the sanctuary.

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so then the type, the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.⁶⁹

To substantiate this particular position, Adventists quote Acts 3:19 in the King James Version: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

The chief difficulty with the Adventist contention is that the Greek of Acts 3:19 does not substantiate their teaching that the blotting out of sins will take place as a separate event from the forgiveness of sins. According to modern translations (the Revised, the American Standard, the Revised Standard, and the New International Versions), the text should read “Repent therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Peter was urging his listeners to repent, to turn from their sins, in order to receive the forgiveness that comes only from the presence of the Lord. This text gives our Adventist brethren no support for their “heavenly sanctuary” and “investigative judgment” teachings.

⁶⁷ *The Great Controversy*, 421–422.

⁶⁸ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, n.d.), 355–356.

⁶⁹ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 357.

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II. The Investigative Judgment

The Bible explicitly declares that when one accepts Christ as Lord, God freely forgives all his sins and ushers him from spiritual death to spiritual life solely on the merits of the perfect life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. To this Adventists fully agree, and this makes their teaching on investigative judgment inconsistent. In John 5:24 the Greek deals a devastating blow to the Seventh-day Adventist concept of investigative judgment: “He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life and shall not come under judgment but is passed from death to life” (literal translation).

Christians, therefore, need not anticipate any investigative judgment for their sins. True, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the deeds done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10), but this has nothing to do with any investigative judgment. It is a judgment for rewards. Several judgments are mentioned in the Bible, but it is my opinion that not one passage substantiates the “investigative judgment” theory—for theory it truly is, relying upon out-of-context quotations and supported by the “Spirit of prophecy.” They are welcome to this dogma, but faithfulness to New Testament teaching forbids the idea that “the blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement” or “until blotting out of all sins.” The Scriptures clearly teach, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Further evidence of the completeness of the forgiveness of God and the cleansing power of the blood of Christ is found in the first chapter of the book of Hebrews, where the Holy Spirit informs us that Christ as “the image of God” “upholds all things by the word of his power” and that on Calvary He by himself purged our sins (Hebrews 1:3).

For the word translated “purged” or “purification” the Holy Spirit chose the Greek word *katharismos*, from which we derive *cathartic*. Hence it is said of the Lord Jesus and His sacrifice that He alone, “by himself,” gave to our sinful spiritual natures the complete catharsis of forgiveness and purification on the cross. Christians may now rejoice that the Lord Jesus Christ is not engaged in weighing our frailties and failures, for “He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14). We cannot, therefore, accept the Adventist teaching on the investigative judgment since we are convinced that it has no warrant in Scripture. We must reject what we believe to be their unbiblical concept that the sins of believers remain in the sanctuary until the day of blotting out of sins.

Our Adventist brethren, in teaching this doctrine, are overlooking the fact that “the Lord knoweth them that are his” (2 Timothy 2:19), and it was no less an authority than the Lord Jesus Christ who declared, “I ... know my sheep” (John 10:14). The Apostle Paul declares that “Christ died for the ungodly ... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for

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us ... we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:6, 8, 10). This does not balance with the Seventh-day Adventist teachings of the heavenly sanctuary, the transfer of sins and the investigative judgment. In his epistle to the Colossians the Apostle Paul further declared, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross ... you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight" (1:20–22). Once again the Holy Spirit declares that we are now reconciled through the death of Christ, having been forgiven all our trespasses through the blood of the cross (Colossians 2:13–14).

Seventh-day Adventists, relying upon Daniel 7:9–10; 8:14; and Revelation 14:7; 11:18, which refer to "judgment" and "books," attempt to "prove" that the investigative judgment is meant, but examination of each of these texts in context reveals the paucity of the claim. None of these texts has anything to do with any judgment going on now. Neither the grammar nor context supports such a contention. One can only base this interpretation by acknowledging the Adventist premise that the historicist school of prophetic interpretation is the only accurate one, and by accepting the Adventist definition of the sanctuary and judgment. It is significant that non-Adventist biblical scholars have never allowed these so-called "investigative judgment" interpretations, because there is no scriptural warrant for them apart from implication and inference.

As mentioned previously, James White at first categorically denied the teaching of the investigative judgment and gave good reasons for his rejection. Although he later embraced this doctrine, his objections are still valid:

The event that will introduce the judgment day will be the coming of the Son of Man to raise the sleeping saints and to change those that are alive at that time. ... It is not necessary that the final sentence should be given before the first resurrection as some have taught; for the names of the saints are written in heaven and Jesus and the angels will certainly know who to raise and gather to the New Jerusalem.⁷⁰

Relative to the time for the beginning of the great judgment, James White quoted, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at [not before] his appearing in his kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).⁷¹

Asked when he expected the judgment of Daniel 7 to take place, James White stated,

⁷⁰ *A Word to the Little Flock* (1847), 24.

⁷¹ James White in the *Advent Review* (August 1850); brackets are White's.

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Daniel in the night vision saw that judgment was given to the saints of the most high, but not to mortal saints. Not until the ancient of days comes will the little horn cease prevailing, which will not be until he is destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming.⁷²

We see by this that James White at the beginning rejected the investigative judgment with good reasons. But two more of his statements are quite revealing:

The advent angel, Revelation 14:6–7, saying with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” does not prove that the day of judgment came in 1840 or in 1844, nor that it will come prior to the Second Advent. ... Some have contended that the day of judgment was prior to the Second Advent. This view is certainly without foundation in the Word of God.⁷³

At that time, James White was on good biblical ground, but he later forsook this position for the theories and prophetic speculation promulgated by his wife and other influential Adventist leaders. The Lord Jesus Christ himself placed the judgment after His second advent when He said, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations” (Matthew 25:31–32). One need only read the following passages to see that the judgments of God upon believers and unbelievers are future events. Notice the language employed:

1. “The quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (Acts 10:42; 1 Peter 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:1).
2. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory ... he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matthew 25:31–33).
3. The wheat and the tares: “The harvest is the end of the world” (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43).
4. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body ... whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).
5. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10–12).

⁷² James White in the *Advent Review*.

⁷³ James White in the *Advent Review*.

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6. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

In addition to these verses, which unmistakably indicate future judgment, the writer to the Hebrews declares, "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). This, to any non-Adventist, is conclusive evidence that there is no investigative judgment now going on for believers to fear.

Hebrews 4:13 also exposes the faulty concept of investigative judgment: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Since our Lord knows the disposition of "cases" allegedly being reviewed in heaven, what need is there for "investigative judgment"? We believe the Scriptures decidedly do not warrant such a doctrine.

Concluding our comments on the investigative judgment, note that rewards for believers will be meted out after the second coming of our Lord, or at "the resurrection of the just," for the resurrection of life (John 5:29; Luke 14:14). Even the Adventists concur in believing that the judgment of the wicked will not take place until the end of the millennial age (Revelation 20:11–12; Matthew 25:31–46). Once again the investigative judgment theory conflicts with the biblical teaching on judgment regarding both believer and unbeliever. To this writer's mind, the great error of the sanctuary and investigative judgment teachings is the premise that sins confessed by Christians are not fully dealt with until the conclusion of the investigative judgment, a position Scripture will not allow.

Adventists, in the opinion of conservative biblical scholars, not to mention the liberal wing of Protestantism, are only speculating with their sanctuary and investigative judgment theories. Actually, most are agreed that they have created doctrines to compensate for errors in prophetic interpretation. But the very doctrines intended to solve their theological problems have in turn only increased their dilemma—a dilemma which they have yet to solve! Romans 8:1 declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation [i.e., judgment] to them which are in Christ Jesus"⁷⁴ and here every Christian's case must rest. We can never be indicted again for our sins or convicted for them, because Christ has fully paid the penalty. For those who believe in Jesus Christ, there is no judgment for the penalty of sin, i.e., eternal separation from God. However, as 2 Corinthians 5:10 teaches, we shall be judged for how we live as Christians. Seventh-day Adventists, we believe, needlessly subscribe to a doctrine that neither solves their difficulties nor engenders peace of mind. Holding as they do to the doctrine of the investigative judgment, it is extremely difficult for us to understand how they can experience the joy of salvation and the knowledge of sins forgiven. Of course, this is true

⁷⁴ Brackets added.

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of so-called Arminian theology on the whole, which teaches that eternal life, given by God to the believer, is conditioned by the sustained faith of the believer in the grace of God.

There is, however, clarification and summary of the doctrine of investigative judgment in *Questions on Doctrine*.

It is our understanding that Christ, a high priest, concludes His intercessory ministry in heaven in a work of judgment. He begins His great work of judgment in the investigative phase. At the conclusion of the investigation, the sentence of judgment is pronounced. Then as judge, Christ descends to execute, or carry into effect, that sentence. For sublime grandeur, nothing in the prophetic word can compare with the description of our Lord as He descends the skies, not as a priest, but as King of kings and Lord of lords. And with Him are all the angels of heaven. He commands the dead, and that great unnumbered host of those that are asleep in Christ spring forth into immortality. At the same time those among the living who are truly God's children are caught up together with the redeemed of all ages to meet their Saviour in the air, and to be forever with the Lord.

As we have suggested, ... Seventh-day Adventists believe that at the second coming of Christ the eternal destiny of all men will have been irrevocably fixed by the decisions of a court of judgment. Such a judgment obviously would take place while men are still living on the earth. Man might be quite unaware of what is going on in heaven. It is hardly to be supposed that God would fail to warn men of such an impending judgment and its results. Seventh-day Adventists believe prophecy does foretell such a judgment, and indeed point out the very time at which it is to begin.

When the high priest in the typical service had concluded his work in the earthly sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, he came to the door of the sanctuary. Then the final act with the second goat, Azazel, took place. In like manner, when our Lord completes His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, He, too, will come forth. When He does this, the day of salvation will have closed forever. Every soul will have made his decision for or against the divine Son of God. Then upon Satan, the instigator of sin, is rolled back his responsibility for having initiated and introduced iniquity into the universe. But he [Satan] in no sense vicariously atones for the sins of God's people. All this Christ fully bore, and vicariously atoned for, on Calvary's cross.⁷⁵

It is apparent, then, that for Adventists the investigative judgment is something very real, and they believe that the final blotting out of their sins depends upon the results of that

⁷⁵ *Questions on Doctrine*, 422–423, 444.

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judgment, culminating in the final destruction (annihilation) of the wicked and of Satan, typified by the scapegoat of Leviticus 16.

III. The Scapegoat

Perhaps no doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism has been more misunderstood than the teaching concerning the scapegoat (Leviticus 16). Because of certain unfortunate choices of words by a few Adventist writers, the impression has been given that Adventists regard Satan as a partial sin bearer for the people of God. This may be accounted for by the fact that in the early days of Adventism they built much of their theology on the typology of the Mosaic sanctuary, using almost exclusively the phraseology of the King James Version. Hence they got into difficulty when dealing with such involved Old Testament concepts as the scapegoat. Not a few scholars, however, support the Seventh-day Adventist concept that Azazel represents Satan. Be that as it may, the important thing is the place of the scapegoat with regard to the atonement of Christ. Do Seventh-day Adventists believe that Satan eventually becomes their vicarious sin bearer? Not at all! This writer is convinced that the Adventist concept of the scapegoat in connection with the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary, and the investigative judgment is a bizarre combination of prophetic interpretation and typology; but it is by no means the soul-destroying doctrine that many people think it is. Let the Adventists speak for themselves:

We take our stand without qualification on the gospel platform that the death of Jesus Christ provides the sole propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10); that there is salvation through no other means or medium, and no other name by which we may be saved (Acts 4:12); and that the shed blood of Jesus Christ alone brings remission for our sins (Matthew 26:28). That is foundational.

When Satan tempted our first parents to take and eat of the forbidden fruit, he as well as they had inescapable responsibility in that act—he the instigator, and they the perpetrators. And similarly, through the ages—in all sin, Satan is involved in responsibility, as the originator and instigator, or tempter (John 8:44; Romans 6:16; 1 John 3:8).

Now concerning my sin, Christ died for my sins (Romans 5:8). He was wounded for my transgressions and for my iniquities (Isaiah 53). He assumed my responsibilities, and His blood alone cleanses me from all sin (1 John 1:7). The atonement for my sin is made solely by the shed blood of Christ. ...

Concerning Satan's sin, and his responsibility as instigator and tempter, no salvation is provided for him. He must be punished for his responsibility. ... He must himself "atone" for his sin in causing men to transgress, in the same way that a master criminal suffers on

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the gallows or in the electric chair for his responsibility in the crimes that he has caused others to commit. It is in this sense only that we can understand the words of Leviticus 16:10 concerning the scapegoat, “to make atonement with him” ...

Satan is the responsible mastermind in the great crime of sin, and his responsibility will return upon his own head. The crushing weight of his responsibility in the sins of the whole world—of the wicked as well as of the righteous—must be rolled back upon him. Simple justice demands that while Christ suffers for my guilt, Satan must also be punished as the instigator of sin. ...

Satan makes no atonement for our sins. But Satan will ultimately have to bear the retributive punishment for his responsibility in the sins of all men, both righteous and wicked.

Seventh-day Adventists therefore repudiate in *toto* any idea, suggestion, or implication that Satan is in any sense or degree our sin bearer. The thought is abhorrent to us, and appallingly sacrilegious. ...

Only Christ, the Creator, the one and only God-man, could make a substitutionary atonement for men’s transgressions. And this Christ did completely, perfectly, and once for all, on Golgotha.⁷⁶

To be sure, the Seventh-day Adventists have a unique concept of the scapegoat, but in the light of their clearly worded explanation, no critic could any longer with honesty indict them for heresy where the atonement of our Lord is concerned. The Adventists have stated unequivocally that Jesus Christ is their sole propitiation for sin and that Satan has no part whatsoever in the expiation of sin. This writer agrees that Satan is the master criminal of the universe and that it is axiomatic, therefore, that he should suffer as the instigator of angelic and human rebellion. There are, of course, many interpretations of Leviticus 16 set forth by learned scholars, the great majority of whom are most certainly not Adventists; so at best the question is quite open. The *Abingdon Bible Commentary* (Methodist) relative to Leviticus 16 and the scapegoats states,

On the goats lots are to be cast, one for Jehovah and the other for Azazel. The translation “Dismissal” in the Revised Version margin here (cf. removal in ASV margin) is inadmissible being based on a false etymology. What the word meant is unknown but it should be retained as a proper name of a wilderness demon.

⁷⁶ *Questions on Doctrine*, 396, 398–400.

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To this statement could be added the opinions of Samuel Zwemer, E. W. Hengstenberg, J. B. Rotherham, and J. Russell Howden, the last of whom wrote in the *Sunday School Times* of January 15, 1927:

The goat for Azazel as it is sometimes misleadingly translated, typifies God's challenge to Satan. Of the two goats, one was for Jehovah signifying God's acceptance of the sin offering; the other was for Azazel. This is probably to be understood as a person being parallel with Jehovah in the preceding clause. So Azazel is probably a synonym for Satan.

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Although Seventh-day Adventists have no exegetical support for their sanctuary and investigative judgment theories, one thing is certain: They have more than substantial scholastic support for assigning the title "Satan" to Azazel in Leviticus 16 concerning the scapegoat. Nevertheless, where the Scripture does not speak specifically it is far wiser to withhold comment. Many critics, in their zeal to shred Seventh-day Adventism and classify it as "a dangerous non-Christian cult," lay much stress upon the scapegoat teaching. In the light of current Adventist statements concerning their concept of the scapegoat, the misunderstandings of the past have at last been brought out into the open, clarified, and presented in a plausible manner.

Much, much more could be written concerning the Seventh-day Adventist concepts of the sanctuary, investigative judgment, and the scapegoat, since they are inseparably linked together. But such writers as W. W. Fletcher (*The Reasons for My Faith*) and other ex-Seventh-day Adventists have exhaustively refuted the position of their former affiliation. The reader is urged to consider the bibliography for additional information on this subject. The saving grace of the entire situation is that the Adventists fortunately deny the logical conclusions to which their doctrine must lead them; i.e., a negation of the full validity of the atonement of Christ, the validity of which they absolutely affirm and embrace with considerable fervor—a paradoxical situation at best!

IV. Author's Note on "The Scapegoat"

We could wish that some of the earlier nonrepresentative Seventh-day Adventist statements on the scapegoat teaching had not been made or, better yet, that they were not still circulated in some quarters. However, to ignore their honest current declarations is, I believe, fundamentally unfair. It appears to me to be little more than blind prejudice. One review of the book *Questions on Doctrine* contains an error frequently found in critical writings. Imputing to their account a position the Adventists do not hold, the review then proceeds to destroy it as if, in the final analysis, it had both exposed and refuted a pernicious error. While it is true that the Seventh-day Adventists do believe that Azazel, in Leviticus 16, does represent Satan, their interpretation of it is far removed from this

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reviewer's straw man. After quoting the Seventh-day Adventist statement: "Seventh-day Adventists repudiate in *toto* any idea ... that Satan is in any sense our sin bearer," this review states, "but then two entire chapters are devoted to proving that Satan did bear our sin." It goes on to describe the Adventist position as "repulsive blasphemy" and "unholy twisting of the Scripture. If the Seventh-day Adventists were sound in everything but this and still held this one gross error, we would still have to consider them as an unscriptural cult."⁷⁷

Now, with some other portions of this review we are in agreement. But many of the statements show a marked predisposition toward removing various statements from context and placing them together to prove contradiction without respect to their setting. It ignores all the Seventh-day Adventist statements that contradict these out-of-context criticisms. The very chapter alluded to clearly shows that Adventists repudiate the meaning the reviewer has attached to the scapegoat concept. As we have noted, it is regrettable that this teaching has been so stated in some Adventist writings as to give the impression that the scapegoat represents Satan in the vicarious role of sin bearer, but the Adventists have clarified this beyond reasonable doubt in the large majority of their publications.

Questions on Doctrine clarifies the concept of the scapegoat in Seventh-day Adventist theology. For Adventists, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns He will place upon Satan the full responsibility for his role of instigator and tempter to sin. Since Satan caused angels and man to rebel against their Creator, Adventists reason that Azazel, the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, is a type of Satan receiving the punishment due him. However, as we have seen, Adventists repudiate the idea that Satan is their vicarious sin bearer in any sense. They point out, and rightly so, that in Leviticus 16 only the first goat was slain as the vicarious offering. The second goat was not killed but was sent into the wilderness to die. Satan similarly bears the weight of guilt and final punishment culminating in annihilation as the master criminal who has promulgated sin during the period of God's grace toward lost men. To quote the Adventists again:

Satan's death, a thousand times over could never make him a savior in any sense whatsoever. He is the arch sinner of the universe, the author and instigator of sin. ... Only Christ, the Creator, the one and only God-man, could make a substitutionary atonement for men's transgressions. And this Christ did completely, perfectly, and once for all on Golgotha.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *The King's Business* (March 1958): 22–23.

⁷⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, 400.

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Law, Grace, and Salvation

In order to understand the Adventist view of law and grace, especially in relation to eternal salvation, we must consider the Adventist antipathy toward antinomianism.

The very word *antinomian* (*anti*, against, and *nomos*, law) describes the conflict between those who believe that not only were the Ten Commandments abrogated at Calvary but even the principles underlying them were “abolished” so that the Christian is bound neither by them nor by those who believe that the Decalogue is as binding today as when it was given at Sinai.

From the beginning of church history, the great majority of evangelical Christians have been as strongly opposed to antinomianism as are the Adventists. Unfortunately, however, the latter have tended to label antinomian anyone who disagrees with their definition of “the law of God.” Consequently, this has created a great problem in semantics, which has disrupted the lines of communication, so to speak, between Adventists and other Christians. Although we believe in obeying the laws of God and in good works as the evidence of saving faith, we strenuously object to “commandment-keeping” to the extent of supposed spiritual superiority. A principal cause of their legalistic tendencies is the Adventists’ abhorrence of antinomianism.

By virtue of the fact that they obey the Fourth Commandment as well as the other nine, Adventists maintain that they alone are God’s commandment-keeping church. To be sure, theologians have differed over the nature and extent of the moral law of God, and doubtless the controversy will continue until our Lord comes again. Any group, however, that feels they are the only ones that keep God’s commands is likely to foment schism in the body of Christ.

From their beginning, Adventists have concentrated upon “the law of God,” and in *Questions on Doctrine* they devote thirty-four pages to the exposition of this subject. Although the Adventists repudiate legalism, that is, the doctrine that keeping the law merits salvation, a legalistic spirit does exist in some of their teaching. For example, although denying that the ceremonial law is binding upon Christians, they quote from it to defend their classifying certain foods as “unclean.” Although Adventists reject antinomianism, in their desire to avoid the abuses of grace they actually abuse grace by magnifying the letter of the law. How Adventists arrived at this position has been well explained by D. M. Canright (*Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, chapter 17). In one place, Canright sets forth a series of propositions which, in some areas, are exegetically irrefutable, and with which I am in full agreement.

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Now let us examine the Adventist claim that the law is binding upon the Christian, as stated in their Fundamental Beliefs, *Questions on Doctrine*, and wherever their writings touch on this subject.

I. The Principle of Law

To begin with, we agree to the proposition that the principle underlying the moral laws of God is indeed eternal and consistent with His character. However, we must distinguish between the principle of the law of God and the expression of that principle in specific statutes such as those in the Pentateuch. Because Adventists do not seem to make this distinction, it appears to this writer that they relate law to grace, which is an unhealthy practice. They claim that “the Law” was in effect in Eden and during all the centuries thence to Sinai. Wherever the Bible speaks of “commandments” or “law,” most Adventists apparently assume that it means the Decalogue. We must, however, clearly differentiate between the principle of the law of God and the function of the law of God as revealed in the Pentateuch. Not only the Adventists but many historical Protestant groups have failed to make this distinction, and therefore have been guilty of carrying over into the New Covenant some of the legalistic Jewish functions of the law.

A. The Dual-Law Theory

In *Questions on Doctrine*, the Adventists distinguish between “the moral law of God—the Decalogue—and the ceremonial law,” setting forth the distinctions in two columns.⁷⁹ In column one is the Decalogue, which was spoken by God, written by Him on tables of stone, given to Moses, and deposited in the Ark. It dealt with moral precepts, revealed sin, and is in effect today. They insist that Christians must “keep the whole law” (James 2:10), and that we shall be judged by this law (James 2:12). They believe that the Decalogue is established in the life of a Christian by faith in Christ (Romans 3:31), and that Christ magnified the law (Isaiah 42:21), which Paul described as “spiritual” (Romans 7:14).

In column two, Adventists analyze the law of ceremonial ordinances, which were abolished at the cross. They contrast this with “the moral law of God—the Decalogue,” stating that the latter was not abolished because it was separate from the ceremonial law. Concerning the ceremonial law, Adventists teach that it was spoken and written by Moses and given to the Levites who deposited it by the side of the Ark, and that it governed ceremony and ritual. This law prescribed offerings for sins, but the apostles gave no commandment to keep it, and the Christian is not bound by it nor can he be blessed by it. Indeed, they say, “the Christian who keeps this law loses his liberty”; it

⁷⁹ *Questions on Doctrine*, 130–131.

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“was abolished by Christ,” and was “the law of a carnal commandment” containing nothing of a moral nature, the Decalogue being “the moral law of God.”

Now although there are both moral and ceremonial aspects of the law in the Pentateuch, as well as civil and judicial, nowhere does the Bible state that there is any such juxtaposition of ceremonial with moral law. In fact, the whole Bible teaches that “the law was given through Moses” (John 1:17) and that it is essentially a unit, a fact that the Adventists have overlooked. We make this observation after comparing the application of the term *law* in the Old and New Testaments.

To illustrate: As noted above, the Adventists claim that the law of Moses and the Decalogue are separate, the one being ceremonial, the other “the moral law of God.” Therefore, although the ceremonial law was abolished at the cross, the moral law remains in effect; and so they insist in “commandment-keeping,” not to earn salvation, but, as it works out in the practice of many, to retain salvation. If, however, the ceremonial law and the Decalogue are inextricably bound together, and if both are referred to as “the law,” the distinction that the Adventists and others make between them is fictitious. To prove this is to nullify their interpretation concerning “the moral law.” Let us examine the Scriptures to see whether such a distinction as they propose can be sustained.

The highest authority on this subject is the Lord Jesus Christ. When speaking of “the law,” He alluded to both moral and ceremonial precepts; e.g., Mark 10:19 (moral) and Luke 5:12–14 (ceremonial). The Gospels abound with similar references to “the law” without distinguishing between the moral and the ceremonial, and certainly not teaching that they are separate codes.

We do not mean that the law has no moral and ceremonial aspects, for it has, but they are only aspects, not separate codes or units. They are parts of the one law, which “was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The Apostle Paul, certainly an authority on “the law,” dogmatically affirms that the role of the schoolmaster has ceased and that the Christian is “dead to the law.” Note, also, that the word *schoolmaster* is in the singular, which destroys the Adventist notion that there is more than one law. If the moral law were separate from the ceremonial law, instead of both being aspects of one law, Paul would have had to write that the laws were our schoolmasters to bring us to Christ, and that now “we are no longer under schoolmasters.” But he knew and taught that the law was a unit and that it was perfectly fulfilled as such in the life of our Lord and on the cross of Calvary.

By His perfect life, the Lord Jesus met all the requirements of the moral aspect of the law. By His death, He fulfilled all the ceremonial ordinances that prefigured His incarnation and sacrifice. He himself said,

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Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill. 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 (Matthew 5:17–18).

Which law did Christ fulfill? If He fulfilled only the ceremonial law as the dual-law theory states, the moral law is yet to be satisfied. But “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4); and as we have shown, there are no distinct codes such as moral as contrasted with ceremonial law. The distinction is arbitrary and contradicts the declaration of Scripture that the believer lives by a higher principle: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

In order to maintain the dual-law theory against the biblical declaration that the one law has divisions or aspects, Adventists must explain why this is true in relation to at least twenty passages in the New Testament, a dozen of them in the words of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches that there are not two laws, but one; that this law is not only in the five books of Moses but in the Prophets and the Psalms as well. Christ looked upon moral, ceremonial, and prophetic precepts as parts of the one law, which pointed to His life, ministry, death, and resurrection. As He said to His disciples that first Easter Day, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

A study of the relevant biblical passages (including John 8:17 cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; John 10:34 cf. Psalm 82:6; John 12:34 cf. Psalm 72:17; John 15:25 cf. Psalm 35:19; and John 19:7 cf. Leviticus 24:16) should convince any objective reader that the law is a single gigantic structure comprised of several aspects: moral, ceremonial, civil, judicial, and prophetic. This whole structure was referred to by Christ and the apostles under the heading of “the law,” and which structure was completely fulfilled in the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ who instituted the universal principle of divine love as the fulfillment of every aspect and function of the law. Our Lord said:

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. ... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12; 22:37–40).

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Instead of the Adventist belief that the law must be “kept” as a sign of obedience to God, Christ here teaches that the Christian obeys God when he obeys the supreme commandment of love. This teaching is reiterated by the greatest of the apostles, who wrote to the Galatians, “All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Galatians 5:14). Obviously, if we love our neighbors as ourselves, we do so because we love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds. If we do not so love God, we cannot love our neighbors as ourselves. Thus on this “great commandment” rests the law in all its aspects.

Note the language of these passages, for they indicate the strong emphasis given by our Lord. In Matthew 22:40 Christ uses the Greek word *holos*, translated sixty-five times in the New Testament as “all,” forty-three times as “whole,” twice as “every whit,” once “altogether,” and once “throughout.” With these renditions all lexicons agree, so there can be no linguistic doubt that the all-inclusive principle that binds and seals all aspects of the law into a unit to be fulfilled in the life of a believer, because it has been fulfilled by the Savior, is once again declared to be “love.”

The Apostle Paul uses an entirely different word to sum up the unifying principle of the law and the only principle which the Scriptures say fulfills it. This is the Greek word *pas*.

In the New Testament *pas* is translated 748 times as “all,” 170 times as “all things,” 117 times as “every,” 41 times as “all men,” 31 times as “whosoever,” 28 times as “everyone,” 12 times as “whole,” and 11 times as “every man.” We see then how the Holy Spirit rendered linguistically impossible any escape from the clear declaration that the principle of love indeed *fulfills* all the precepts of the law in their *entirety* since the two terms used most frequently in the New Testament to describe inclusiveness were utilized by both Christ and Paul to enunciate this vital issue.

Finally, notice Paul’s powerful admonition to the believers at Rome:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:8–10).

In this context the greatest authority on the law in the New Testament, next to Jesus Christ, used the very emphatic Greek word *etera*, which is translated forty-two times in the New Testament as “other.” Unquestionably the Apostle Paul not only considered the law a unit of which the Decalogue is only a part (quoting five of the Ten Commandments)

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but he indicated the rest of the law—ceremonial, civil, and judicial—by the word *other*. Thus if one is to be a true “commandment-keeper,” he has only to obey the divine principle of love, and God looks upon this as fulfillment of “the law.” The Holy Spirit does not specify the moral, ceremonial, or civil law. He emphatically states that love is the fulfillment of “the law”—a tremendously important statement, to say the least!

It is significant that in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, after quoting five of the ten commandments that the Adventists steadfastly affirm constitute “the moral law,” the apostle conspicuously omits what the Adventists maintain is God’s great “seal”—the Sabbath. In fact, the words “any other commandment” must include even the Sabbath in the law of love. Nowhere is this more decidedly emphasized than in the usage of a peculiar term that appears but twice in the New Testament; here in Romans 13:9, and again in Ephesians 1:10. The term in question is the Greek *anakephalaioantai*, which in both instances means “to sum up, to repeat summarily, and so to condense into a summary ... to bring together.”

We see that the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, taught in both Romans 13:9 and Ephesians 1:10 that as God in the fulness of time intended to “gather together,” (KJV) or “sum up” (RSV), those whom He had chosen in Christ, in like manner He has forever condensed or summed up, comprehended or gathered together, the law in all its aspects and divisions under the all-embracing principle of love. By not adhering strictly to the established laws of sound biblical interpretations, Seventh-day Adventists seem to have overlooked this fact in the New Testament. In the course of our study of Seventh-day Adventist literature, we have been impressed by the fact that some Adventists will cite texts largely out of their context and grammatical structure in what appears to be an attempt to enforce an arbitrary theory of two laws (moral and ceremonial) upon the believer in the age of grace. In so doing, they violate that principle which the Apostle Paul states “sums up” or “condenses” all of the commandments of the entire law, perfectly fulfilling them under the one heading, “the great commandment,” upon which, our Lord declared, “hang all the law and the prophets,” the imperative of love.

On page 131 of *Questions on Doctrine* it is stated that the ceremonial law is now “abolished” (Ephesians 2:15); and, “the Christian who keeps this law is not blessed,” (Galatians 5:1–6) but “loses his liberty” (Galatians 5:1, 3). Nevertheless, Adventists religiously observe some ceremonial laws, especially with regard to “unclean food.” Now, although they deny that their rejection of “unclean” food is based on Mosaic prohibitions, all their literature on the subject appeals to the very law that they insist has been “abolished.” Under the covenant of law, nowhere but in the Mosaic ceremonial aspects of the law are people forbidden to eat oysters, clams, lobsters, crabs, reptiles,

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rabbits, and swine's flesh, but the Adventists still claim the validity of such prohibition. We wish that they would be consistent in following their dual-law theory and abandon their "unclean foods" restriction, which binds them to what even they admit is an abolished ceremonial teaching; a teaching that they also declare can cause the Christian to "lose his liberty" and miss the blessings of God. Writing on this subject of unclean foods with apostolic authority and the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul unequivocally declared, "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink" (Colossians 2:16 RSV). And he warns Timothy that in the latter days some persons will "enjoin abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for then it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer." Finally, he sums it up thus:

I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ... For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men (Romans 14:14, 17-18).

From these texts it is apparent that Adventists limit their own liberty in Christ by voluntary bondage to ceremonial precepts, and it is the dual-law theory that has largely caused their confusion and the consequent error of law-keeping.

For this teaching, which lapses so easily into legalism, we find no biblical authority since it is demonstrably true that the law of Moses and the Decalogue are a unit described throughout Scripture as "the law." The fact that the Decalogue was written on stones (Exodus 31:18) and the law of Moses written in a book (Exodus 24:4, 7; Deuteronomy 31:24) in no way proves that one is moral and the other ceremonial. As we have seen, the law of Moses, written in a book, and deposited by the Levites by the side of the Ark, deals not only with ceremonial ritual matters, but with those moral precepts contained in the Decalogue itself. One could not be fulfilled, as Christ prophesied and accomplished, and the other left unfulfilled, for then God's sacrificial plan would not have been consummated at Calvary.

B. "Law" in the New Testament

When New Testament writers spoke of "the law," they usually meant all five books of Moses, which contain moral, ceremonial and civil ordinances. It was national and applied only to Israel and to anyone who became an Israelite. Nowhere in Scripture is it applied to anyone else. Although the Gentiles, as Paul says, "have not the law," its great moral

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principle applied to them, so that the Gentiles “do by nature that which is contained in the law,” but they did not come under law as given to Israel.

Acts 15:23–32 describes how the leaders of the Christian church at Jerusalem, all Jews, were very careful not to impose the demands of the law upon the Gentiles. For them, the complete “law” —moral, ceremonial, and civil—had been fulfilled, and the one law to observe now was to love God and your neighbor. St. Augustine remarked, “Love God, and do as you please,” for if we truly love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, we do only those things that please Him. This is “the law” of the New Testament, the only guide for the Christian. We are “no longer under the law, but under grace,” and the function of the “schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24) has forever and irrevocably ceased.

Let us see how these first Christian leaders solved the problem of “the law”:

And they wrote letters by them after this manner; the apostles and elders and brethren send greetings unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord to send chosen men unto you. ... We have sent therefore, Judas and Silas. ... For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well (Acts 15:23–25, 27–29).

Since “the law” includes the precepts of the Pentateuch and certain sections of the Psalms and Prophets, this message to the Gentiles contradicts all dual-law teachers who insist that we must for any purpose “keep the law.” We know from a comparison of the New Testament with the Old that the Decalogue of itself is not the entire moral law of God, as our Adventist brethren often insist, for there are many other commandments that are neither inferred from, implied, nor contained in the Decalogue, but which are just as moral as anything appearing in Exodus 20. Although nine of the Ten Commandments are enunciated in the New Testament, we have seen that they are “comprehended, summed up, or condensed” in the words of Paul in the great commandment of love (Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:14). So the Adventists have no argument against the total fulfillment of all the law by the life and death of our Savior.

In Acts 15:24, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem reiterate this principle in their letter to the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: “Certain which went out from us have

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troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment.”

Now, although Seventh-day Adventists affirm that law-keeping cannot merit salvation, nevertheless they teach that by breaking the law one forfeits salvation. They invoke a principle that was fulfilled in the life and death of Christ, and in so doing they place themselves in direct opposition to the great law of love enunciated by Christ and the apostles, and are in effect putting “a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). To those who invoke the law as the criterion of obedience in the Christian life, the Word of God replies, “We gave no such commandment” (Acts 15:24).

Paul’s phrase “any other commandment” in Romans 13:9, of course, includes abstinence from meats offered to idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication, for love of God would enjoin discernment and obedience in all these things.

To support their argument that a Christian must obey the commandments, Adventists and other Christian bodies cite such passages as the following:

If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me (John 14:15, 21). And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ... And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. ... He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. ... By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 2:3–4; 3:22, 24; 5:2–3).

We, too, yield to the authority of those verses; but the fallacy of the position lies in the concept that the word *commandments* always refers to the Ten Commandments, which Adventists maintain are “the moral law of God.” This claim cannot be substantiated from Scripture; in fact, it is contradicted by the Bible. Let us see how the Lord Jesus and the Apostle John applied the words “commandments” and “law.” First, consider the conversation of our Lord with the lawyer in Luke 10:25–28:

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

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He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Clearly, the Lord Jesus did not subscribe to the Seventh-day Adventist view that “commandment-keeping means keeping all of the Ten Commandments,” none of which He mentions in this passage. Christ did not say, “Keep the Ten Commandments, especially the fourth one, and thou shalt live.” He said, in effect, “Obey the law of love upon which all the law and the prophets rest, and thou shalt live.” This refutes the Adventist claim that when Jesus spoke of commandments He meant only the Decalogue.

Among those who listened to our Lord’s discourse in the Upper Room was the Apostle John, who records the “new commandment ... that ye love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). To this commandment John refers in the passages quoted from his first epistle. Nowhere does he mention the Decalogue or any part of the moral law of God. Instead, he writes:

This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. ... And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 3:23; 4:21).

And in his second epistle he says,

I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it” (2 John 5–6).

From this it is clear what John means when he speaks of “commandment” or “commandments.” How different from ironclad obedience to what many, including Adventists, sometimes call “The Eternal Ten.” By “the righteousness of the law” and fulfillment of the law, Christ and all the New Testament writers mean not the Ten Commandments but the eternal law of love. The motivating power of the universe—love—is to motivate obedience to God. By loving Him and one another we fulfill all moral law. The chief function of the law was to reveal sin and to “slay” the soul that righteousness might come by faith, and it was given for the unregenerate, not the redeemed: “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the

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lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers" (1 Timothy 1:9).

C. The Charge of Pharisaism

By believing they are God's commandment-keeping church, Adventists have exposed themselves to the charge of Pharisaism. Because they monopolize such passages as the following, they give the impression of claiming to be the only people on earth: (1) "That keep the commandments of God;⁸⁰ (2) "They that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"; and (3) "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

We admire the desire of our Adventist brethren to obey the commandments of God; but, we ask, what commandments? If they answer, "The Decalogue," we reject their effort to bring us under bondage, for we "are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). If some fail to recognize that "the law" of the New Testament is love for God and for one another, and that it fulfills and supersedes all previous embodiments of divine principle, then the issue is clear. Such people speak like "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal," because they do not give supremacy to the "new" and "great commandment."

Concluding this section on the principle of law, we may sum up our position briefly:

The Adventist insistence that there are two separate codes of laws, the moral and the ceremonial, and that the former is in effect today and the latter was abolished at the cross, finds, we believe, no exegetical or theological basis in Scripture. We have also shown that they select numerous texts out of context and juxtapose them in order to validate their contention. We have seen that the greatest of all commandments is not included in the Decalogue or "moral law." And yet upon this great commandment, love for the Lord and for one's neighbor, "hang all the law and the prophets." The nineteenth chapter of Leviticus alone is sufficient to refute the dual-law theory, for it contains moral, ceremonial, and civil laws sometimes all appearing in the same verse, and yet Leviticus is called by Christ, "the law," as are the other four books of Moses.

The Adventist contention that since the Ten Commandments were spoken by God, inscribed on stone, and placed within the Ark, they are superior to the law written by

⁸⁰ All the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of Revelation 22:14 read, "They that wash their robes," so the verse gives no support whatever for "commandment-keeping." This fact well-informed Adventists recognize, but a large segment still attempt to utilize certain faulty and incorrect English translations to "prove" their position.

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Moses in a book and placed by the side of the Ark is fallacious. This is true because the book placed by the side of the Ark actually contains more moral law than does the Decalogue itself. It is, therefore, superior to the Decalogue, at least in scope.

The Bible refutes the Adventist contention that the law was in force in Eden and that it was known to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the patriarchs. Not one verse of Scripture can be cited free from inference, deduction, and implication that teaches such a doctrine. The Word of God states,

The law was given by Moses. ... Did not Moses give you the law? ... If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law). ... The covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul. ... The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us (John 1:17; 7:19; Hebrews 7:11; Galatians 3:17; Deuteronomy 5:2-3).

The Adventists' contentions, therefore, concerning the eternal nature of the Decalogue and the time of its application to man are mere conjecture. Although we admit that the principle of the law was, in effect, written upon the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit, so that they were judged by it (Romans 2), there is a vast difference between the principle of the law and the embodiment of that principle in a given code (Sinaitic-Mosaic), which the Adventists fail to recognize.

Finally, the Old Testament Scriptures all teach the unity of the law. Christ endorsed it, and the apostles pointed out that its chief purpose was to condemn man and show him his need of redemption that he might come to Christ, the author and fulfiller of all the law. We who are "led of the Spirit ... are not under the law" (Galatians 5:18), for "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). This love energizes us to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" that in us "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled" (Romans 8:4). In Jeremiah 31:31-34, the prophet states that under the new covenant, God would write His law "in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." In 2 Corinthians 3:3, the Apostle Paul declares that Christians are "the epistle of Christ ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." The motive for obedience to this law is the imperative of love: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

The great foundational moral law of the universe is therefore declared to be unchanging love. This is vastly different from the national or Mosaic law given only to Israel. That law was designed to be fulfilled, even though it was based upon the eternal principles of the moral character of God (Colossians 2:14-17). And when its fulfillment did take place

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and the character of God was imputed to the believer and imparted to his life by the power of the indwelling Spirit, the entire Mosaic system passed away; but the eternal principle, the law's foundation, remained, and is operative today as the law of love, the supreme "commandment" and the only "law" under which the Christian is to live.

The concept of law in Seventh-day Adventism, then, leads them to the unbiblical and at times legalistic position that although they are "under grace," by failing to "keep the commandments" they are in danger of coming "under law" again.

The Word of God, however, describes the Christian under grace as "dead to the law" that he might "live unto God" (Galatians 2:19), and nowhere is it taught that one can "come alive" again so that the function of the law is resumed.

II. The Relationship of Grace to Salvation

Although Adventists lay great stress on "commandment-keeping" and "obedience to the moral law of God as contained in the Ten Commandments," they devote a large portion of their writings to the New Testament doctrine of grace. As we saw earlier, Seventh-day Adventists believe in salvation by grace alone, and vehemently deny that "law" plays any part as a basis for redemption. In their own words,

Salvation is not now, and never has been, by law or by works; salvation is only by the grace of Christ. Moreover, there never was a time in the plan of God when salvation was by human works or effort. Nothing men can do, or have done, can in any way merit salvation.

While works are not a means of salvation, good works are the inevitable result of salvation. However, these good works are possible only for the child of God whose life is inwrought by the Spirit of God. ... One thing is certain, man cannot be saved by any effort of his own. We profoundly believe that no works of the law, no deeds of the law, no effort however commendable, and no good works—whether they be many or few, sacrificial or not—can in any way justify the sinner (Titus 3:5; Romans 3:20). Salvation is wholly of grace; it is the gift of God (Romans 4:4–5; Ephesians 2:8).⁸¹

These and many similar clear-cut statements in current authoritative Seventh-day Adventist literature reveal that, despite the "dual-law theory" and the peculiar concept that the law is still operative in the life of the believer, Adventists confess the basis of their

⁸¹ *Questions on Doctrine*, 141–142.

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salvation to be grace, and grace alone, the only basis upon which God deigns to save the fallen children of Adam.

In chapter 14 of *Questions on Doctrine*, Adventists spell out their allegiance to divine grace as the only channel of salvation: "According to Seventh-day Adventist belief, there is, and can be, no salvation through the law, or by human works of the law, but only through the saving grace of God."⁸²

Christians who are familiar with historical theology know that the Adventists' position on law, though tinged with legalism, has its roots in the basic Arminian position that one receives salvation as a free gift of God; but, once he has received this gift, the believer is responsible for its maintenance and duration, and the chief means of accomplishing this is "commandment-keeping" or "obedience to all the laws of God."

Since Adventists are basically Arminian, we may logically deduce that, in a sense, their salvation rests upon legal grounds. But the saving factor in the dilemma is that by life and by worldwide witness, Adventists, like other so-called Arminians, give true evidence that they have experienced the "new birth," which is by grace alone, through faith in our Lord and His sacrifice upon the cross. One would be callous and uncharitable indeed not to accept their profession of dependence upon Christ alone for redemption, even though there is inconsistency in their theological system.

Some Christians make a great issue of the teaching of "eternal security," and perhaps rightly so because it is an important truth. However, no matter how strongly we may feel about it, our conviction does not entitle us to judge the motives and spiritual condition of other believers in this respect. This is our principal reason for taking the position that Seventh-day Adventists are Christians who believe the historical Gospel message. They cannot rightly be called non-Christian cultists or "Judaizers," since they are sound on the great New Testament doctrines including grace and redemption through the vicarious offering of Jesus Christ "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10) and give evidence of "life in Christ."

For many centuries, there has been much controversy over the juxtaposition of the principles of law and grace in the Scriptures. If evangelicals today were asked, "Do you believe that grace and law are in direct opposition?" the answer in most cases would be a strong affirmative. Through the years, confusion has been caused by the abuse of both principles by two groups of equally sincere Christians. One group believes that all law has ceased; the other that the Ten Commandments are still God's standard of righteousness and must be obeyed or salvation is forfeited. What both groups have failed

⁸² *Questions on Doctrine*, 135.

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to grasp is that the great conflict is not between law and grace as such; rather, it centers around a proper understanding of their relationship and respective functions.

We have established that love is the ground and source of the doctrine of grace, but the law was necessary to expose the sinfulness of sin and the depth of man's moral depravity. When law becomes the ground of salvation or of restraining the Christian from practicing sin, it intrudes upon the province of grace. When a Christian is not controlled by love, grace is abused and its purpose is nullified. All law is fulfilled by love, as our Savior and the apostles taught, but the Christian can never please God if he obeys for fear of the law. Life under law binds the soul, for the tendency is for man to obey not because he wants to please God but because he fears God's judgment. Under grace, love works upon the regenerate heart, and what was legalistic duty under law becomes gracious obedience under grace. Actually, grace and love demand more than the law, which to the Pharisees required only outward obedience. Grace commands us to "do the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). Seventh-day Adventists declare that they obey the law not out of fear but out of love for God. However, it is to be regretted that in a large proportion of their literature on the subject, they declare that the keeping of the law is necessary to maintain salvation, and thus they introduce the motive of fear instead of the biblical imperative of love.

The Apostle John defined the issue when he wrote, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). As a governing principle, a measure of righteousness, a schoolmaster, and an instrument of death, the law was supplanted by grace—the unmerited favor of God. All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, having passed from death to life through the sacrifice of the Son of God, possess the divine nature and righteousness. Because He first loved us, we are compelled and impelled to love and serve Him. In obedience to the great law of love, the Christian fulfills the righteousness of the law (not the law itself; this Christ alone did); and by the transforming power of the indwelling Holy Spirit he will "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

Seventh-day Adventists believe, we repeat, that they are saved by grace. However, they are often prone to believe that their remaining saved depends on "commandment-keeping."

More recently, an Adventist professor summed up the church's present understanding of this issue as a generally unified but still tension-filled affirmation of salvation by grace alone through faith—evidenced by obedience. Dr. Gary Land, Andrews University in Berrien Spring, Michigan, explained,

The committee issued a statement on "the dynamics of salvation." Because humanity is desperately in need of salvation, it said, God has taken the initiative

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to provide it. When the individual human being, with the Holy Spirit's help, decides to accept reconciliation with God, he receives a new status in Christ, encompassed by such terms as justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, adoption, and sanctification. This new status involves a new life in Christ characterized by new birth, restoration, growth, grace and faith, assurance, and praise. Consummation is achieved with Christ's Second Coming, which will restore the universe to a "perfect, sinless state."

In essence, the statement addressed the righteousness by faith debate by analyzing the theological terms involved, attempting to bring together all elements of the subject, and placing the whole within an Adventist eschatological context. Although it included an emphasis on sanctification, that concept was now one of several elements. By offering an enlarged understanding of salvation, the statement appeared to provide room for both sides of the debate.

It appears on the surface that the righteousness by faith debate pivoted on the technical issue of a definition. But the fact that so many people could get so disturbed over the question indicates that it hit a raw nerve within Adventism. The justification by grace through faith position seems to have appealed to a large number of Adventists because it offered an assurance of salvation that they felt the traditional emphasis on sanctification had not allowed. On the other hand, many of those who opposed the new teaching feared that it might open the door to an antinomianism that would undermine the Adventist concern with God's law.

In the view of most denominational theologians, Seventh-day Adventists had the unique problem and unique opportunity of understanding the relationship of justification and sanctification, or law and gospel, in a way that did justice to both.⁸³

That current Adventist teaching regarding sanctification is based on grace, not works, is clear from the Adventists' doctrinal discussion in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, which states,

True repentance and justification lead to sanctification. Justification and sanctification are closely related, distinct but never separate. They designate two phases of salvation: Justification is what God does *for* us, while sanctification is what God does *in* us.

⁸³ Gary Land, ed., *Adventism in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 218–219.

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Neither justification nor sanctification is the result of meritorious works. Both are solely due to Christ's grace and righteousness. ... The three phases of sanctification the Bible presents are: (1) an accomplished act in the believer's past; (2) a process in the believer's present experience; (3) and the final result that the believer experiences at Christ's return.⁸⁴

III. The Author of Salvation

Because He took our sins upon himself, in obedience to His Father's will, the Lord Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8–10). This truth Seventh-day Adventists believe. They strongly assert their belief in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His equality with the Father, and His perfect, sinless human nature, and expound these truths in detail. However, they teach that before His incarnation the Lord Jesus Christ bore the title of Michael the archangel. This interpretation differs greatly from that of Jehovah's Witnesses who believe that Christ was a created being and that "He was a god, but not the Almighty God who is Jehovah."⁸⁵ The Adventists make this very clear:

We emphatically reject the idea ... and the position held by the Jehovah's Witnesses. We do not believe that Christ is a created being. We as a people have not considered the identification of "Michael" of sufficient prominence to dwell upon it at length either in our literature or in our preaching. ... We believe that the term Michael is but one of the many titles applied to the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead. But such a view does not in any way conflict with our belief in His full deity and eternal preexistence, nor does it in the least disparage His person and work.⁸⁶

Although a number of authoritative commentators support the Adventist view, the New Testament, I believe, does not warrant this conclusion. Most of the evidence that the Adventists submit is from the book of Daniel, the rest from the Apocalypse. By comparing such designations as "angel of Jehovah," "angel of the Lord," "Prince," and "Michael," the Adventists conclude that Michael is another title for the Lord Jesus Christ. But Seventh-day Adventists maintain that although he is called "the archangel" (*archangelos* or "first messenger"), he is not a created being since, in the Old Testament, "angel of Jehovah" is a term of Deity. In the light of this, we do not judge them because of their view of Michael, but call the reader's attention to the ninth verse of the book of Jude, which says, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he

⁸⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 123.

⁸⁵ *Let God Be True* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1952), 100.

⁸⁶ *Questions on Doctrine*, 71.

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disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (v. 9).

The word translated "durst" in the King James Bible is the archaic past tense of "dare"; so Michael "did not dare" bring against Satan a railing or blasphemous (*blasphemos*) judgment. The Greek word for "dare" is *tolmao* and appears 16 times in the New Testament, and in the negative always means "not daring through fear of retaliation." Thus if Michael was Christ, according to the Seventh-day Adventists, "He did not dare" to rebuke Satan for fear of retaliation.

Adventists agree that fifteen times in the New Testament word *tolmao* carries the meaning indicated. But, since its use in Jude 9 refutes their notion that Michael is a title of Christ, they reverse its meaning here! As the Adventists know, none of the commentators to whom they appeal has grammatically analyzed or diagrammed the passage in the Greek or for that matter commented upon exclusive usage of *tolmao* in the Scripture of the New Testament. The agreement of such commentation therefore gives no validity whatever to the Adventists' misuse of *tolmao*. The preincarnate Christ, the *logos*, having the nature of God (John 1:1), certainly would not refer the creature Satan to God the Father for rebuke. While He was on earth, Christ the Creator rebuked Satan many times. Would He then fear him during His preincarnate life? Scripture contradicts this.

The Adventist explanation is:

The devil, the prince of evil, could rightly be said to deserve a railing accusation, but to such a thing Michael would not stoop. To say that Michael could not, in the sense that He did not have the power or the authority to do so, would not be true. It is not that Michael could not, in the sense of being restricted, but rather that He would not take such an attitude.⁸⁷

This statement appears to be an attempt to escape the fact that the word *dare* (*tolmao*) in the New Testament always connotes fear, including its use in Jude 9. The text teaches that because Michael did not have the authority to rebuke Satan, "he did not dare" to do so through fear of superior retaliation. There is no implication that Michael's position was so high that he "would not stoop." The context, grammar, and root meaning of *tolmao* contradict the Adventists' attempt to make this text support their view of Michael. All authorities on Greek grammar agree that the Adventist interpretation violates the classic and New Testament usage of *tolmao*.

⁸⁷ *Questions on Doctrine*, 80.

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Thus the Adventist statement about Michael is neither linguistically nor scripturally accurate. Although they repudiate the Jehovah's Witnesses' position, they wrest this passage from its true meaning and read into it their own theory concerning Michael as Christ.

In conclusion, I am convinced of the sincerity of the Adventists' claim to regeneration and allegiance to the New Testament principle of saving grace. I appreciate their high regard for the law of God and their desire to obey it. I cannot agree, however, with their insistence upon linking "commandment-keeping" to observance of the ceremonial law, especially with regard to "unclean" foods. I feel, moreover, that they err in saying that Michael is a title of Christ, and I believe that I have shown that they violate the linguistic and scriptural meaning of Jude 9.

Author's Note

One of the chief critics of Seventh-day Adventism is a vocal ex-Adventist printer of Minneapolis, a man who has written much against his former church. Writing in *The Sword of the Lord*, August 2, 1957, he bitterly assailed Seventh-day Adventists as willful deceivers. Since his writings are repeatedly quoted by most of the other critics we shall discuss his charge, but in the interest of brevity we shall confine ourselves to one of his chief areas of criticism—law and salvation in Seventh-day Adventist theology.

This critic quotes the book *Steps to Christ*, by Ellen G. White, in the following manner: "The condition of eternal life is now just what it has always been ... perfect obedience to the law of God."

He then maintains that Seventh-day Adventism teaches this, and on the surface it appears that he has proved his point; namely that to Adventists, salvation is a combination of grace, faith in Christ, plus the keeping of the law. A closer look at the statement in the context from which the critic removed it, however, serves to refute this position. Wrote White in the very same context:

We do not earn salvation by our obedience, for salvation is the free gift of God to receive by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith ... here is the true test. If we abide in Christ and the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our actions will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His Holy law. ... Righteousness is defined by the standard of God's holy law as expressed in the ten precepts given on Sinai. That so-called faith in Christ that professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God is not faith but presumption. "By grace are ye saved through faith." But "faith, if it hath not works is dead." Jesus said of himself before He came to earth, "I delight to do thy will, O my God:

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yea, Thy law is within my heart." And just before He ascended again to heaven, He declared, "I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." The Scripture says, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ... He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to so walk even as he walked," because "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."

The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. ... Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey a holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are counted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned. ...

So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.⁸⁸

In the light of White's complete statement on this subject, we see that our critic omitted her principal thesis, that we are saved by grace. There are not a few instances of similar carelessness on the part of the writer of this article. The result is that his work is largely discredited and discounted by those who know the proper methods of research.

Seventh-day Adventists are well aware of the law and grace problem and in *Questions on Doctrine* they state,

There has been regrettable misunderstanding as to our teaching on grace, law, and works, and their interrelationships. According to Seventh-day Adventist belief, there is, and can be, no salvation through the law or by human works of the law, but only through the saving grace of God. This principle, to us, is basic.⁸⁹

Further the Adventists state:

⁸⁸ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 36–49.

⁸⁹ *Questions on Doctrine*, 135.

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Salvation is not now, and never has been, by law or works; salvation is only by the grace of Christ. Moreover, there never was a time in the plan of God when salvation was by human works or effort. Nothing men can do, or have done, can in any way merit salvation.

While works are not a means of salvation, good works are the inevitable result of salvation. ... One thing is certain, man cannot be saved by any effort of his own. We profoundly believe that no works of the law, no deeds of the law, no effort however commendable, and no good works—whether they be many or few, sacrificial or not—can in any way justify the sinner (Titus 3:5; Romans 3:20). Salvation is wholly of grace; it is the gift of God (Romans 4:4–5; Ephesians 2:8). (*Questions on Doctrine*, 141–142.)

Ellen G. White, certainly an authoritative voice in Adventism, summarized it thus:

Christ is pleading for the church in the heavenly courts above, pleading for those for whom He paid the redemption price of His own lifeblood. Centuries, ages, can never diminish the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice. The message of the gospel of His grace was to be given to the church in clear and distinct lines, that the world should no longer say that Seventh-day Adventists talk the law, but do not teach or believe Christ.^{90 91}

Recommended Resources

1. Walter Martin, *Seventh-day Adventism*, Audiotape, *Walter Martin Ministries*, www.waltermartin.com.
2. Walter Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (Zondervan, 1960).
3. Geoffrey J Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Baker, 1977).
4. Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (M & R Publications, 1982).
5. Walter Martin and Jill Martin Rische, *The Kingdom of the Cults Handbook* (Bethany House, 2019).
6. Walter Martin and Jill Martin Rische, *The Kingdom of the Cults Study Guide* (2019).
7. Walter Martin, Jill Martin Rische, Kurt Van Gorden, *The Kingdom of the Occult* (Thomas Nelson, 2008).

⁹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, n.d.), 92.

⁹¹ Martin, W. (2019). *The kingdom of the cults: the definitive work on the subject*. Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House.