

Discoveries in Doctrine

The following collection of notes is a result of many, many hours of prayerful study in God's Word over a little more than the past decade of my life. As I began to read and study my Bible consistently for the first time, I gradually became convinced that there were a variety of conflicts between the positions I had taken all my life and what I believed God was showing me through the scriptures. This paper is the product of my need to reconcile those beliefs to what my studies have shown me the Bible says on certain issues/doctrines.

As my belief system began to change, I became aware that it would be important to find a way to explain to family and friends this departure from the traditional package of beliefs which I have long held. It is my hope and prayer that this material will help you to understand why I have changed my views. I also desire for you to recognise that I have not surrendered my allegiance to my Jesus, but rather these changes come as a response of loyalty to Him in preference to a cherished set of beliefs.

Let me make it clear that while I am thrilled by the new insights God has been revealing to me, this has not been an easy journey for me. I don't like to have my life's foundations challenged any more than the next man. My personality type loves neat tidy packages and hates questions to which there seem to be no ready answers. For that reason, the Adventist system holds a strong appeal. In contrast to some of the most honest of other Christian groups I have had contact with, who handily admit that there are many questions to which they do not have concrete answers, the Adventist system offers a set of neatly wrapped solutions and authoritative answers to seemingly all possible questions and problems. That offers a sense of security which is not easy to turn your back on.

Therefore, my venture into this research is not an act of rebellion or escapism, but rather a response to mounting evidence which I can no longer conscientiously ignore. While my personality style would prefer to "not rock the boat" and to remain "grounded" in what is familiar and offers ready answers, I believe emphatically that I have a responsibility, as does any seeker of truth, to follow through to its conclusion any evidence which suggests even possible contradiction between the Holy Word of God and any cherished system of thought.

*Lord, give us an honest heart that seeks only YOUR truth, without regard to our own wishes or desires or thoughts of convenience. I want to live as close to Your will and ideal as I possibly can, but this requires **knowing** Your will and ideal. Please reveal it to us; quicken our minds and hearts to recognise and receive your guidance and prompting. Cleanse us of prejudices and self-will. Thank-you Lord. I trust You to answer my prayer and guide us ever closer to Your heart.*

Legend

Black type - my own words

Green type - words of Scripture

Red type - words of Christ

Blue type - quoted from a human source

Nearly *all* emphasis supplied

(Please be patient with my sometimes lengthy quotes. Since it is my view that sometimes grievous errors of misinterpretation occur because of an inclination to only quote passages, or parts of passages, that suit a particular viewpoint, it is my aim to avoid this problem as distantly as possible. Thus, sometimes I have included passages in which whole sentences or even paragraphs could have been replaced with ellipses. If you feel that I am belabouring a point, it may be that I am trying to make it clear that I am not twisting that passage to my own advantage.)

After the cross, what place does The Law have in our lives?

The Seventh-day Adventist church places an extraordinary measure of importance, and rests much of the credibility of some of its doctrines, upon the remaining status of “The Law of God”, including the Ten Commandments, as binding upon the present-day Christian.

Is The Law still binding upon the Christian? Exactly what constitutes the “Law of God”? What about what some Christians say regarding The New Covenant vs. The Old Covenant? Are there different applications of the Law—is there a distinction between “Moral” and “Ceremonial” aspects of the law? I believe Paul and some of the other New Testament writers offer some surprising answers to these questions if we are willing to hear them. We will examine those answers in this section.

CEV: Rom 13:8-10

⁸ Let love be your only debt! **If you love others, you have done all that the Law demands.** ⁹ In the Law there are many commands, such as, “Be faithful in marriage. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not want what belongs to others.” But all of these are summed up in the command that says, “Love others as much as you love yourself.” ¹⁰ No one who loves others will harm them. **So love is *all* that the Law demands.**

Using the same Greek word for “law” (νόμος / nomos) as he does in the many following references to The Law being fulfilled and abolished, Paul wraps several of the distinct commands from the Decalogue in the **same package**. Nowhere do I see any justification for the position that there are separate portions of The Law in Paul’s (or any other New Testament writer’s) mind. Whether it’s the old sacrificial system, the civil code from Sinai, or the Decalogue, it’s all part of the whole that was abolished at the Cross!

It seems to me that verse 10 is stating that The Law is superceded, fulfilled and replaced by Love. The above text ushers in the new order of “Law”. It is my belief that God has *replaced* “The Law” with what I call “*The Law of Love*” for the Christian.

The Ten Commandments were part of the *Old Covenant* which God established between Himself and the children of Israel, and were a “*sign*” between God and those people. The Decalogue, while an excellent standard against which to measure the moral success of our lives, was *never* part of the agreement God made with the Christian—that is, the *New Covenant*. **No part of that Old Covenant is binding upon the Christian.** This “new” *Law of Love* is the “sign” and foundation of the *New Covenant*. (“**By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**” *John 13:35, NIV*) Thus, if we act in any way that is inconsistent with the dictates of love—if we work against the best interests of the other party, then we are guilty of sin—and stand condemned by the law of Love.

NIV: Eph 2:15-18

¹⁵ by **abolishing** in his flesh **the law** with its **commandments** and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

The Contemporary English Version says, “¹⁵ to **destroy** the Law of Moses with **all** its rules and commands.”

Here is the Greek dictionary rendering of the word which is translated “abolishing” above:

katargevw **katargeáo**, *kat-arg-eh'-o*; to be (render) **entirely** idle (**useless**), lit. or fig.:—abolish, **cease**, cumber, deliver, destroy, **do away**, **become (make) of no (none, without) effect**, fail, loose, bring (come) to nought, put away (down), vanish away, **make void**. *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words*

It seems quite clear to me that we are both reconciled and *that we remain* on good terms with God solely and exclusively by the work Christ did for us upon the cross, and our continuing acceptance of the gift of that atonement through faith—not in any fashion whatsoever by what we may think to merit, *or demonstrate*, through our works. I am also convinced that the Law and “its commandments”—including the fourth—are abolished, made of none effect, put away as no longer of any use, by the atoning work of Christ upon the cross. When He breathed his last breath upon that cross, the last page of the chapter of “The Law” was finally and forever closed!

Some may ask, “What about when Jesus said ‘**If you love me, keep my commandments**’?” (*John 14:15*.) As far as I have noted, neither Jesus or anyone else in the New Testament ever referred to any part of the Old Testament law as Jesus’ commandments. Thus, when Jesus instructs us to “**keep my commandments**”, I am convinced that He was speaking of those principles which He taught during His earthly ministry, and not any part of the Old Testament Law.

In John 13:34 we read “**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**” In Matthew 22:37-40 we read, “**Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**” It seems clear that Jesus is *replacing* the *old* commandments with these *new* commandments. He says that *all* of the Law and the Prophets hang on loving God and loving our fellow man.

NIV: Gal 4:21-5:6

²¹ Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³ His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. ²⁴ **These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai [ie. The Ten Commandments] and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.** ²⁵ **Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai** in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written:

“Be glad, O barren woman,
who bears no children;
break forth and cry aloud,
you who have no labor pains;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband.”

²⁸ Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born in

the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.
³⁰ **But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.”**
 [ie. get rid of the Old Covenant and its old Law.] ³¹ Therefore, brothers, **we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.** [We are not children of The Law and the Old Covenant, but of the Spirit and the New Covenant.] ¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and **do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**
² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, **Christ will be of no value to you at all.** ³ Again I declare to **every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.** ⁴ **You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.** ⁵
 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶
 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**

The context of this passage is crystal-clear. Paul equates the Old Covenant with the Ten Commandments (“**One covenant is from Mount Sinai**”) and then says that, like Hagar, it should be sent away! In the next breath, he adds: “Stand firm, then, and **do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**”

Furthermore, “I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.” It is undeniable that he does not consider being obligated to obey the whole law a blessing. If Paul regards the observance of one of the unique “signs” of the *Old Covenant* with Israel as dangerous to the Christian desiring to be right with God, could that possibly apply then to others of those unique signs? Could it also apply to the religious observance of the Sabbath? (I am not talking about a preference for a particular day of worship here, but rather the zealous, legalistic *observance* of Sabbath as an obligation, and the urging of that practice upon others. If one chooses to worship on Saturday rather than Sunday as a preference rather than because it is “required”, that is another matter.)

At this point, some have argued, “Yes, but whatever Paul may say, he is not the Christ. If Jesus did not clearly declare The Law abolished, then I will not accept that.” We must ask ourselves—do we accept the Bible to be “The Word of God”? Do we believe it is directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, or not? Those books included in the New Testament which were written by Paul—were they written at the direction of the Lord, or were they merely a zealous man’s opinions? I choose to believe that Paul’s claim to have been specially selected by God to proclaim the way of the Lord is true and valid.

NIV: Gal 3:10-14

¹⁰ **All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”** ¹¹
 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” ¹² **The law is not based on faith; on the contrary,** “The man who does these things will live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit

Paul clearly refutes the idea that our faith in Jesus is intended to help us be successful (in an earthly context) in our moral duty to keep the Law. Our faith in Jesus is intended to *replace* our attempts to keep the law (in any kind of a legal context). It is an all or nothing deal. If we try to “keep” *any* of it we have to keep it *all*, and thus be justified by our works. Or, we must completely rely on Jesus’ work, and abandon ourselves to the control of the Spirit. **We must take our focus off keeping rules!** If our focus is on **anything** but our **relationship** with our redeemer, we *will* wander astray!

CEV: Gal 3:15-19

¹⁵ My friends, I will use an everyday example to explain what I mean. Once someone agrees to something, no one else can change or cancel the agreement. ¹⁶ That is how it is with the promises God made to Abraham and his descendant. The promises were not made to many descendants, but only to one, and that one is Christ. ¹⁷ **What I am saying is that the Law cannot change or cancel God’s promise that was made 430 years before the Law was given.** ¹⁸ **If we have to obey the Law in order to receive God’s blessings, those blessings don’t really come to us because of God’s promise.** But God was kind to Abraham and made him a promise. ¹⁹ **What is the use of the Law? It was given later to show that we sin. But it was only supposed to last until the coming of that descendant who was given the promise....**

WOW! We see with exact clarity that The Law was only a temporary institution—with periods **both before and after** when it has no application to *anyone!*

Consider this, taken from the KJV Bible Commentary:

Man’s covenant. Better, human testament. This word (Gr *diatheke*) strictly speaking is not a contract between two parties (Gr *syntheke*), but a binding will or testament instituted by the first party. **Confirmed.** Ratified. **The Greek perfect tense means that the ratification is complete and in force.** The matter stands settled.... **Or addeth thereto.** No new condition may be imposed, **no codicil allowed.** Since no one can alter, amplify, or annul a man’s testament after it has been duly executed, **surely no one can add to God’s unconditional promise to Abraham, as the legalists were trying to do. God’s promise was not a matter of mutual arrangement and it remains inviolate....**

17. Confirmed before God. By repeated ratifications and sealed with God’s own oath (Gen 22:16–17; Heb 6:13). The perfect participle indicates the certainty of prior ratification. Unbelief here charges God with perjury. **Four hundred and thirty years after.** God’s ratified promise of long standing certainly could not be rendered inoperative by the law. **The law, which was not given for centuries after God’s gracious promise, had nothing to do with that promise or with Abraham’s justification. If the law had nothing to do with Abraham’s justification, how can it have anything to do with anyone’s justification? Cannot disannul.** Does not repeal. The law cannot unconfirm God’s confirmed testament. **None effect.** Cancel, render inoperative. The law cannot invalidate the promise which God has validated; it cannot nullify the promise....

19. Wherefore. Why then the law? What is the meaning and purpose of the law? **It was added.** Not as a codicil. **The law was not part of God’s original and confirmed testament, and it was not added to it later. The law was not added to grace; it did not become another ingredient of salvation. It was brought in alongside of the promise. It was supplemental and subordinate. Because of transgressions. Because** (Gr *charin*) means for this cause and denotes the aim of the law. **Transgressions** (Gr *parabasis*) mean a step beyond a fixed limit into forbidden territory. It is a willful act of violating an explicit law, overstepping what is right into the realm of what is wrong. **The law was added much later to make men conscious of the existence and the extent**

of sin (Rom 3:19; 5:20). The law was added to reveal sin, not remove it. To show men the need of righteousness, not to be a means of securing righteousness. The law drives men to despair and to cry out for deliverance (Rom 7:24–25). The law declares man to be a helpless, hopeless sinner. *Till the seed should come. The law was temporary and preparatory, from Moses to Christ; it was not of permanent duration. It was a temporary institution between the original promise and its fulfillment in Christ. After Christ came, the law was abolished (Rom 10:4) as a means of securing righteousness....*

Sin is enmity toward God. Sin does *not* exist because The Law was given and we broke it. Sin existed, *and therefore The Law was given*—to identify and quantify sin. Once The Law has shown us our sinfulness and our inability to correct it, the purpose of that law has been fulfilled. Once a sinner has been brought to his knees, that law is no longer needed. It has fully served its purpose. If all members of society would regard every other member's rights and feelings as important as his own, there would be no need for civil laws. However, sin leaves even the strongest pillar of society in need of rules—none of us is selfless all the time.

NIV: Gal 3:21-25

²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ **But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.** ²⁴ **Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** ²⁵ **But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**

This is so clear that I can scarcely think of any comments to add. Bearing in mind the above examples showing a clear **non-distinction** of any different *classifications* within The Law, Paul is positively emphatic that the Christian living *by faith*, is *no longer under the law*.

CEV: Rom 5:20

²⁰ The Law came, **so that the full power of sin could be seen.** Yet where sin was powerful, God's kindness was even more powerful.

There was a holy purpose to "The Law," but according to Paul in Gal 3:21-25 above, it was temporary. Here in Romans, he demonstrates that it was to show us in clear and concrete terms just how greatly in need of God's salvation and changing power we are. But, after having shown us this, it has served its purpose. Thus, the many references to the "The Law" being abolished and put away.

As I have said, I believe there remains a greater Law—the law of love. Jesus said, "**A new commandment I give you, that you love one another.**" If we truly practice true, committed and humble love toward our Lord and our brother, we will no longer have need of the clarity and concreteness of the 'the letter of the law', for we will be in the habit of practicing 'the Spirit of the law'—the principles upon which "The Law" was based.

I believe it is more important than ever to seek and internalise "God's Law." We should constantly be seeking to know God's will and plan, and meditating upon how we can fit *ourselves* into it, (not the other

way around). But this rests upon the foundation of loyalty and love and relationship rather than the fear of being judged for “doing something wrong.”

A spirit of loyalty and relationship are much more likely to generate a true and natural response of behaviour than keeping our eye on the list of rules. Also this method of regulating our behaviour will create much less stress and drain on our mental energies, and will foster an infinitely greater likelihood of remembering the ‘right’ response in any given situation as it is then springing forth from a natural harmony with our priorities.

see Romans 3:19,20

NIV: Heb 8:13

¹³ By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

NLT: Heb 10:9

⁹ Then he added, “Look, I have come to do your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to establish the second.

So we see that the “first covenant”, of which the Ten Commandments are a part according to Paul (see Gal 4:24,25), now stands **anceled!** Of course the *principles* of the law—the manifestation of God’s character—remain, embodied in Jesus’ “New Commandment” of love, and His teachings. But that new law does not include any of the “signs” of the Old Covenant—which were given to Israel alone.

NIV: Mark 2:21,22

²¹ “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²² And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.”

I think this is making it very clear that there is really no connection between the old Jewish system and the new system of Christianity. If “no one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment....and no one pours new wine into old wineskins” then it seems reasonable that one should not take any of the old manners or customs from Judaism and try to apply them to Christianity. Nor should one try to merely apply the new Christianity over the fabric of the old system of Judaism, like a patch or label.

I believe this means that the whole way of doing things as a Christian will be radically different than they would have been done as a Jew. We need a whole new wineskin! I think there will be little or no similarity between how a Christian worships and how a Jew worshipped. This can include forms of worship such as sacrifice, how the lay person relates to the clergy, how a person relates to God (directly vs. through an intermediary), and yes, even which day the Christian *chooses* to worship upon. There is basically *no connection* between the Christian and the Jew. Therefore, I do not believe that the Christian can be expected to be bound in any way to things which were incumbent upon the Jew. Again, Jesus said, “A *new commandment I give you.*” It was as though He was opening a door and ushering us into a new “room” in His house!

NIV: Acts 15:19-20

¹⁹“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

I believe it is significant that James, the brother of Jesus and pastor of the church in Jerusalem, pronounced that it should not be made “difficult for the Gentiles who are turning the God.” The only directives to be handed down to these Gentiles are that of abstaining from food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, and from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. If there was a need for the Gentiles to observe the Ten Commandment Law, there would have been a need for explicit instructions confirming that. They were *Gentiles*.

NIV: Acts 15:24-31

We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ **It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:** ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell. ³⁰ The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.

“It seemed good *to the Holy Spirit* and to us not to burden you with *anything* beyond the following requirements...” Food sacrificed to idols, blood, meat of strangled animals, sexual immorality.

These four items are the *only* directives to come out of the discussion, or more properly, argument of vs 5 where the Jewish converts were, much the same as Adventists are doing now, asserting that Gentile Christians *must* obey the system of Law. It is abundantly clear that this council decided that it was indeed *not* necessary for the Gentile converts to observe “The Law.”

see Acts 15:5 and Acts 15:19-20

CEV: Rom 3:21,22

²¹**Now we see how God does make us acceptable to him.** The Law and the Prophets tell how we become acceptable, **and it isn't by obeying the Law of Moses.** ²² God treats everyone alike. He accepts people **only** because they have faith in Jesus Christ.

It seems difficult to get more clear than this! The NIV states that “a righteousness from God, *apart from the law*, has been made known.”

“He accepts people *only because they have faith in Jesus Christ!*”

CEV: Rom 3:27-30

²⁷ What is left for us to brag about? Not a thing! **Is it because we obeyed some law? No! It is because of faith.** ²⁸ We see that people are acceptable to God because they have faith, **and not because they obey the Law.** ²⁹ Does God belong only to the Jews? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is! ³⁰ There is only one God, and he accepts Gentiles as well as Jews, simply because of their faith.

I love this. God is *our* God—and He accepts us “*simply because of [our] faith*”!!

CEV: Rom 7:1-6

My friends, you surely understand enough about law to know that laws only have power over people who are alive. ² For example, the Law says that a man's wife must remain his wife as long as he lives. But once her husband is dead, she is free ³ to marry someone else. However, if she goes off with another man while her husband is still alive, she is said to be unfaithful. ⁴ That is how it is with you, my friends. You are now part of the body of Christ and are dead to the power of the Law. You are free to belong to Christ, who was raised to life so that we could serve God. ⁵ When we thought only of ourselves, the Law made us have sinful desires. It made every part of our bodies into slaves who are doomed to die. ⁶ **But the Law no longer rules over us. We are like dead people, and it cannot have any power over us. Now we can serve God in a new way by obeying his Spirit, and not in the old way by obeying the written Law.**

We are now subject to the leading and guidance of the Spirit, but we are “widowed” to the law. *But the Law no longer rules over us. We are like dead people, and it cannot have any power over us. Now we can serve God in a new way by obeying his Spirit, and not in the old way by obeying the written Law.* v 6

So, there we have it—made as plain as it could be. Paul says that The Law has no more power over those of us who live under the New Covenant than a marriage contract has over a person whose spouse has died!

CEV: Rom 10:3b,4

So they refuse to trust God, **and they try to be acceptable by obeying the Law.** ⁴ **But Christ makes the Law no longer necessary for those who become acceptable to God by faith.**

The focus is on our *attitude*, not our performance! Faith is an *attitude*.

NIV: Gal 4:1-7

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² **He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.** ³ So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

I think this makes a marvellous and clear point. We were under the “stewardship” of the law, “until the time set by [our] Father.” Does the father regard the steward, or servant, more than he does his own flesh-and-blood son or daughter? No! But until the appointed time, that child is under the authority of that servant, or steward, . . . or *law*. But, praise the Lord—we have been redeemed from the authority of the law! We now have the Spirit that causes us to call God “Daddy”!

NIV: Col 2:14-17

¹⁴ **having canceled the written code, with its regulations,** that was against us and that stood opposed to us; **he took it away, nailing it to the cross.** ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. ¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

We will cover this passage again in the section on the Sabbath, but I wanted to mention it here as well for the sake of its relevance to our relationship to the “Law”. Paul makes it so clear that this system of laws no longer apply to us!

“The Law”—Conclusion

While I am well aware of the arguments attempting to establish the opposite position, the first conclusion this study brings me to is an absolute conviction that there are no separate categories of The Law: ie. Moral vs. Ceremonial. The New Testament shows no such distinction. Paul clearly demonstrates that he considers it all one package.

The second conclusion I am brought to is that while our relationship with Christ needs to be more vibrant than ever, and our desire to fulfill God’s will in our lives should thus be all the stronger, this package of law is totally nullified and voided in terms of any application to the person who has chosen to believe and trust in Christ and the work which **He** did, *on our behalf*, upon the cross. He tells us that the law “coming down from Sinai” is now cursed and put away. It is replaced by the glorious dispensation of Grace, which we now enjoy; and also by the new “Law of Love” and the leading of the Spirit—the sign of the New Covenant. Thus, as pertains to our next subject of study, I am convinced there can be no remaining authority to make the Fourth Commandment “special” and “eternal.”

The subject of the Sabbath

Probably the most visible and well known of all of the unique doctrines of the SDA church is the seventh-day Sabbath. In “modern” times, this issue was first raised by Joseph Bates. Mrs. White was apparently quite unwilling to accept it at first; and even after she had, she was reportedly reluctant to promote the issue. However, after she had a vision concerning the matter she is said to have fully accepted it. She then promoted it vigorously and eventually, as a product of her authority, it became one of the cornerstones of the Adventist faith. The Sabbath’s modern relevance then, has its roots in the authority of Ellen White and her visions. (We will explore whether or not we should automatically accept Mrs. White’s word on these issues later.)

There are many people who, apart from the authority of Ellen White, attach great value and significance to the Sabbath having been enjoined in the Ten Commandments. Many people still regard themselves as subject to that law, and are therefore certain that they are obliged to keep the Sabbath. However, I believe the above section has shown quite clearly that there is no binding connection between the Law of Sinai and the Christian.

In this section, we will examine together *all* of the New Testament references to the Sabbath and see if there is a strong case for the continuing relevance and importance of the it—*sola scriptura*. (And maybe a little historical record thrown in for clarification.) The following notes are *all* of the topical occurrences of the word “Sabbath” I found in the New Testament. Any occurrences that are omitted are merely redundant (ie: parallel accounts of the same incident in the gospels).

Before we get started on this study in the New Testament, I think it is quite important to observe that while the Creation story mentions that God blessed the seventh day, it is neither enjoined in any manner, nor is it titled the “Sabbath.” That word does not occur until Israel is found wandering in the wilderness. This means that we have no *scriptural* basis for declaring that any of the Old Testament patriarchs were Sabbath keepers until Moses. Not Adam, not Enoch, not Noah, Not Abraham, not Jacob, etc.

Further, the formula “evening and morning were the ____th day” is missing from the seventh. And while it states that God rested on the seventh day, it does not state that He rested *only* on the seventh—that is, that He stopped resting at the end of the seventh day. In fact, the word “rested” in both Gen 2:2 and in Ex 20 is in the “imperfect” tense— indicating an action which is not finished yet. So the suggestion seems to be that He *began* resting on that day—a rest He (and man) continued in until man sinned. At this time, God had to return to work—now, that of restoring man to Himself. Therefore, our rest in the finished work of Jesus is our true, unending, perfect Sabbath—our real rest.

NIV: Matt 12:1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. ²When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

³He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. ⁵Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? ⁶I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. ⁷If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

It seems to me here that Jesus is indicating there are times when the rules should bend before the needs of

the people. However you interpret this passage, it would be extremely difficult to extract an argument for the continuing validity of the Sabbath from it. Jesus declares Himself “Lord of the Sabbath”—but it seems to me that He is thereby bringing the importance of the Sabbath *down* to its proper station rather than holding it *up* to special esteem.

NIV: Luke 6:1-5

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. ² Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

³ Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Here is another reference to the same incident as in Matthew 12:1-8, above. Does it not seem that Jesus is saying there are times when human need takes a higher priority than the “rules.” The shewbread was strictly forbidden to anyone but the priests—but David and his band were *hungry*! It sounds like this human need was more important to the priest (see Mark 2:23-28) than the rules—and Jesus seems to approve. Jesus also elevates Himself to a position of ownership, or “lordship” over the Sabbath. He is definitely scolding the Jews for their narrow view of how to observe the Sabbath.

As He is Lord of the Sabbath; if it was so important for us to remember to esteem it after he left (especially if it was to become a pivotal identifier of His loyal people) then surely He would have made some kind of statements about it in a supportive vein while He was here. But I cannot find even one! In spite of the great importance Adventists assign to the Sabbath as they believe it relates to end-time events, the book of Revelation contains nothing that I can find that even alludes to the Sabbath issue—indeed the word “Sabbath” does not appear *even one time* anywhere in the text of the entire book of Revelation!! So, how can anyone use the Bible to assert that the only people who have God’s exclusive confidence and special blessing are those who carry the banner of the Sabbath into battle with the rest of Christendom?

NIV: Matt 24:20

²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

This is, according to what I have read, a matter of safety or practicality, rather than honouring the sacredness of the Sabbath. The main gates of the city would be closed on the Sabbath. Therefore, in a situation where the city was under attack, this would make escape much more difficult and perilous. Also, naturally, flight in the winter would be much more dangerous.

It appears then, that this reference is quite pragmatic.

NIV: Mark 1:21

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.

Of course Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. He was a Jew. The last Person ever who *was* still under the law. However, as Jesus also observed the Jewish feasts such as the Passover, the Festival of Tabernacles, etc.—and we are certainly not expected to observe those ceremonies—I do not believe this text gives us any evidence that He expects us to do now as he did then; at least in this regard.

NIV: Luke 14:1-4

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. ² There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. ³ Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” ⁴ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away.

Jesus was not only ignoring the Jews’ system, and ‘doing His own thing’—He was challenging them to test their thinking. Trying to persuade them that they were clinging to shadows. In another account (Mark 3:5), Jesus became indignant at their callousness—their bent toward putting the supposed forms of the law above the needs of human beings.

NIV: Luke 23:54-56

⁵⁴ It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.
⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. ⁵⁶ Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

This verse has sometimes been construed as support for the importance of continuing to observe the Sabbath, but I think that application would be quite irrelevant to the *post-resurrection* Christian. These women still had an obligation to observe the law and its sabbath as the New Covenant, or *contract*, was not “signed” until Jesus came out of that tomb on Sunday morning.

If the saints did begin to worship on Sunday in the first generation (and evidence suggests they did), it would certainly not have taken place before the event the new day commemorated!

NIV: John 5:8-12

⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” ¹¹ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”
¹² So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

Obviously, Jesus not only had no hesitation about doing what the Jews considered “work” on the Sabbath but also was not reluctant to charge others to do the same. (Moses had declared it against the law to carry any burden on the Sabbath.) I wish I could have been there first hand to observe the whole demeanor of His attitude toward the Sabbath and what it had become to these people. It is plainly obvious that He disdained that majority’s attitude toward it; most of the passages about the Sabbath in the gospels are about Jesus’ flaunting (if I may dare to use that term without being irreverent) His opposition to the Jews’ attitude toward Sabbath observance.

NIV: John 9:13-16

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. ¹⁴ Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided.

Jesus was constantly being accused of breaking the Sabbath by the Jewish leaders. In my observation, He continued to do just what He did on any other day of the week (during His ministry). I have not found one passage anywhere in the New Testament in which Jesus was upholding the importance of the Sabbath. Instead He scorned blind, mindless servitude to it by saying that "**the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**"

If the Sabbath is a continuing ordinance, why does the New Testament include *so many* references to Jesus getting in trouble with the Jewish religious leaders for *breaking the Sabbath*, and not mention one single instance of Jesus upholding or declaring its value and significance?

NIV: Acts 1:12

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.

a measure of distance

NIV: Acts 13:14,15

¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the **synagogue** and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak."

Paul remained committed to his stated purpose of taking the Gospel first to the Jews, then to the gentiles. I have observed that it seems wherever he went, he would offer his message to the local assembly of Jews—usually by speaking up at the weekly synagogue service. When they would reject the good news, he would then extend the offer to the gentiles. Thus, I can hardly see any support for continuing Sabbath observance in the several references to Paul's attending a Jewish synagogue.

NIV: Acts 13:42-44

⁴² As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the **synagogue**, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³ When the congregation was dismissed,

many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

I regard this as merely another opportunity to witness to the gathered Jews. I see nothing more in this incident.

NIV: Acts 16:13

¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

More of the same. Apparently, there was no synagogue in this city. Therefore, they went to where they expected to find a common place of Jewish worship.

Note that they “sat down and [immediately] began to speak to the women who had gathered there.” This is not exemplary of a habit of ‘church-attendance’, but rather a habit of seizing upon every opportunity to communicate the Gospel to those who did not know. No matter what the day!

NIV: Acts 17:1-4

When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and **proving** that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,” he said. ⁴ Some of the Jews were **persuaded** and **joined** Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

Once again we see Paul going first to the Jewish assembly upon arriving in a new city. There is no strength in this passage for arguing in favour of continuing Sabbath observance by the apostles.

NIV: Acts 18:4

⁴ Every Sabbath he **reasoned** in the synagogue, trying to **persuade** Jews and Greeks.

More of the same.

NIV: Rom 14:1-6

Accept him whose faith is weak, **without passing judgment on disputable matters.** ² One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³ The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, **for God has accepted him.** ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own

master he stands or falls. **And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.**

⁵One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. **Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.** ⁶He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

This passage is perhaps the most damaging to the standard Adventist positions on both the “health message” and evangelical sabbatarianism. Firstly, Paul is suggesting that one who does *not* eat flesh is of but *weak* faith. *One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.* Then, he goes on in very clear language to point out that we have no place to put our views of what day is more sacred than another upon someone else. *One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* ⁶He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord....

This, to me, is conclusive evidence denying the Adventist view of the Sabbath being the identifying mark of God’s loyal remnant. For that position to be correct, it would have to be clearly outlined **in the New Testament**, for I am convinced that God would only use a source which is clearly unimpeachable *to any true and searching Christian* to convince His people of this startling doctrine. The Bible declares itself to be completely sufficient in its truth unto salvation. How can I read and accept the above passage of scripture and then embrace Ellen’s assertion that those who choose to worship their Christ on “The Lord’s Day”, that is, the day of His Resurrection, shall take upon themselves “The Mark of the Beast”? As I will show later, other members of the body of Christ have every justifiable reason for questioning the validity of Mrs. White, and in this case, her statements about the Sabbath.

NIV: Gal 4:9-11

⁹But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰**You are observing special days** and months and seasons and years! ¹¹**I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.**

Paul here seems to be appalled and deeply disappointed that the Galatians were reverting to the forms of the old system which included the sacredness of certain days and ceremonies. If the specialness of the seventh-day Sabbath was to be treated as a separate issue, then it seems reasonable to me to assume that Paul (or at least *someone* in the New Testament) would have clarified that point. But the glaring fact remains: **No one has!**

NIV: Col 2:14,15

¹⁴having **canceled the written code**, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; **he took it away, nailing it to the cross.** ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

It seems to me that the message of the New Testament is that the whole system of Law was “fulfilled” by Jesus. Paul is adamant that we are no longer subject to the legal bonds of “The Law”. According to

numerous paralleling passages of Scripture and many commentaries, this includes the Ten Commandments. Of course this does not make the *principles* of the Ten Commandments something to shun, but rather a “road map” to life. If all this be true, then the issue of Sabbath vs. Sunday can likely be considered a non-issue to God. It seems to be an issue only with people who have become convinced that we are still directly subject to “The Law.”

Is it possible that this has become a central issue to Adventists because it is the primary reason for their very existence?

The theme of the New Testament resounds strongly of relationship and common sense. Jesus sharply challenged the religious leaders of his day for their bent toward adhering to “The Rules” arbitrarily, and not pausing to consider the realities of application. **ESPECIALLY WITH THE SABBATH.**

NIV: Col 2:16,17

¹⁶Therefore **do not let anyone judge you** by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a **Sabbath day**. ¹⁷These are a **shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.**

Is it really possible to interpret this text in any reasonable way so as to **exclude** the Sabbath issue—especially when it is one of the items specifically listed?? And would it be appropriate to “not let anyone judge” us on an issue if that issue were even so important as to be a point that decides our very loyalty to God Himself?? Surely this is not so!!

Importantly, original language study reveals that the word rendered “Sabbath” here is in the singular, not plural, **which stipulates it as a reference to the weekly Sabbath** rather than an annual festival, etc.

4521. savbbaton **sabbaton**, *sab'-bat-on*; of Heb. or. [7676]; the *Sabbath* (i.e. *Shabbath*), or day of weekly *repose* from secular avocations (also the observance or institution itself).

James Strong, New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words

4521 sabbaton { sab'-bat-on }

of Hebrew origin 7676; TDNT - 7:1,989; n n

AV - sabbath day 37, sabbath 22, week 9; 68

GK - 4879 { savbbaton }

1) the seventh day of each week which was a sacred festival on which the Israelites were required to abstain from all work

1a) the institution of the sabbath, the law for keeping holy every seventh day of the week

1b) a single sabbath, sabbath day

2) seven days, a week

Enhanced Strong's Lexicon

New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: Col 2:16 (a cross-reference and commentary)

... **or of the sabbath.** or, the sabbath days. The plural is put for the singular, Mt 12:1.

Bengel notes “used here significantly, for the several days of the week are called

Sabbaths, Mt 28:1; therefore Paul intimates here the removal of all distinctions of days;

for he never wrote more openly of the Sabbath. Christ, after he himself, the Lord of the Sabbath, had come, or before his suffering, clearly taught the liberty of the Sabbath; but he asserted it more openly by Paul after his resurrection. Nor has it yet been clearly defined what is due to the Sabbath, what to the Lord's day; but this has been left to the *measure* of every one's *faith*. The Sabbath is not commended, is not enjoined; the Lord's day is mentioned, not enjoined. A stated day is useful and necessary to those who are engrossed in worldly concerns. They who keep a continual Sabbath enjoy greater liberty. The Sabbath is a type even of eternal things, He 4:3, 4; **yet its obligation does not therefore continue in the New Testament, otherwise the new moons should be retained, Is 66:23**" (*Word Studies*, vol. 2, p. 463). Some argue that the Sabbath, like the tithe, is a pre-Mosaic institution, and therefore our obligation to observe it did not cease with the abolition of the Mosaic law (Ep 2:15) upon the death and resurrection of Christ and the beginning of the New Covenant under grace. In answer to this argument is Paul's very clear statement here, that we are to let no one judge us in respect to the keeping of the sabbath. Furthermore, those who would place us under legalistic obligations of the law, Mosaic or not, are guilty of the Galatian heresy, a heresy which results in spiritual death and loss of salvation (Ga 2:21. 5:2-4). **Nowhere in the Word of God is the Mosaic Law given as binding to the Gentiles** (Ac 15:5, 10, 19, √24. √21:25. Ro 2:14. 3:2. Ep 2:12). **Sabbath observance needs to be left where the inspired apostle has placed it—as a matter of individual conscience, conviction, and preference—but never as an obligation to be imposed upon others** (Ro 14:5).

This is a precise description of my view.

NIV: Heb 4:1-11

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; **but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.** ³ **Now we who have believed enter that rest,** just as God has said,

"So I declared on oath in my anger,
"They shall never enter my rest."

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

⁶ It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. ⁷ **Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today,** when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before:

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts."

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, **God would not have spoken later about another day.** ⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their

example of disobedience.

All of the law and ceremonies were “a shadow of that which was to come—the substance is Christ.” Therefore, as Christ is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament’s formalities, the Sabbath Rest referred to here is our rest in Christ. The wonderful fact that He has done *for us*, that which we could not do for ourselves. It is our *faith* in that substitutionary work which admits us to that rest. Therefore, this passage has little or no relevance to the seventh-day Sabbath. It is speaking on a much larger scale.

“The Lord’s 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. *Walter Martin, Kingdom of the Cults*

Allow me to mention that in spite of his disagreements with several Adventist doctrines, Dr. Martin does not bill the SDA church as a cult in this book. The book is a study into most of the modern religious cults, and as Adventists have often been accused by the public or other churches of being one, he actually includes a strong and friendly *defense* on behalf of Adventism. Dr. Martin endured a great deal of criticism from his colleagues for his favourable conclusions on the matter of Adventism.

A. Testimony of the Fathers

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 A.D. 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.”

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.”

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.... *ibid***

While I immediately confess that these citations do not carry the same authority as scripture, they do refute—on the authority of history—the traditional Adventist position that the Christian Church observed only the seventh-day Sabbath until the decree of Constantine in the early fourth century; and that Sunday observance is therefore merely a Catholic invention. I think it noteworthy that some of these citations are from the period of about AD 100 and even earlier—the same time frame assigned to some of the books included in the New Testament. If “The Lord’s Day” had not been Sunday, or if worship upon it had been in error; would not the apostles have had an opportunity to correct it? Would not some of that correction of as important a point as the Adventists have made it have found its way into the scripture?

On page thirteen of this same pamphlet [*Authoritative Quotations*], 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*:

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 [SUNDAY] 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....

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.^{C-50} On page 2633 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.”

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. *ibid*

Evidence of possible apostolic sanction of worship on Sunday

There are a variety of passages in scripture which seem to suggest that Sunday began to be a day of assembly from the earliest times following Christ’s resurrection. While none of these is utterly air-tight, and worship on Sunday is never enjoined, it is very significant that there are these several references. It is also important to notice that Sabbath observance is *never* enjoined in the post-resurrection New Testament.

Please observe that of the several New Testament references to gatherings on “the first day of the week”, *each* of these gatherings are *always and only* in the context of believers. Furthermore, *every* reference to gatherings of Christians which mentions a day of the week *is on Sunday*. **Not once is a post-resurrection gathering of only believers on the Sabbath mentioned.** Additionally, all of the New Testament references to post-resurrection Sabbath gatherings are *only* in the context of Jewish assemblies which the apostles are attending with the obvious purpose of witnessing to and converting these Jews.

NIV: John 20:19

¹⁹ On the evening of **that first day of the week**, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, **“Peace be with you!”**

If the gospel writer goes to the trouble to record the day of the week of this occurrence, then surely there is *some* significance to it. Is it possible that John is setting a precedent for the recognition of Sunday as a special commemoration of the Lord’s resurrection? Do you consider it blasphemous of me to suggest that *Jesus* may have been setting this precedent?

NIV: John 20:26

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, **“Peace be with you!”**

Here, for the second *Sunday* in a row, Jesus is meeting together with his friends to help them believe in Him. Is this not **the** fundamental reason for gathering for church? Is there a pattern developing here?

Note: There are seven recorded appearances by Christ after his resurrection. Of these seven, *all five* of the occurrences which mention a day are on *Sunday!*

NIV: Acts 20:7

⁷ On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

According to history, the term “break bread” came to refer to The Lord’s Supper. It seems likely that Paul had planned to leave the next day so as to be able to attend the weekly ‘Sunday service’.

NIV: 1 Cor 16:1,2

Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

This appears to be a fairly sound point in favour of assuming an early transfer of weekly assembly to Sunday. If people are encouraged to set aside their offering on a particular day, there would likely be a reason for selecting that specific day. The only reason I can imagine for the particular day that was especially chosen is due to a routine gathering of the saints on that day. It then follows that the only likely reason for this gathering was for the purpose of common study and worship.

Paul further suggests this idea: “so that when I come no collections will have to be made.” This suggests a common ‘setting aside’. If Paul were speaking of an individual ‘setting aside’ as some have offered in an attempt to assert that Sunday was merely a “random” day selection, there would still have to be a collection when he came—that of gathering the monies together from the individuals.

This is admittedly a series of suppositions, but it is certainly logical, and it seems to have reasonable Biblical support.

additionally—

Paul assumes that the church met on Sunday. See also Acts 20:7, and the Lord’s meeting the disciples on two successive Sundays (John 20:19, 26). Because of the resurrection, Christians had exchanged the Sabbath as a primary day of worship for the first day of the week, the day of Christ’s victory over the grave. This change in the major day of assembly and worship also serves as a clear distinction between old Judaism on the one hand and new Christianity on the other. The Lord’s Day, then, is the first day of the week and is sanctioned by the apostles as the proper day of worship. *W.A. Criswell, Believer’s study Bible*

Let’s face it folks, without Christ’s resurrection on Sunday, and all the wonderful, blessed significance of that marvellous event; the Sabbath, and even it’s standing as the memorial of our Creator God, would stand fairly hollow and emptied of meaning to us. The historical fact that God had created our earth, and us, would be rather meaningless if there were no hope of restoration from the condition we find ourselves in! As Paul says, if there is no hope for a better existence through Christ’s sacrifice for us, “we are to be pitied more than all men.” *1 Cor 15:18*

NIV: Rev 1:10

¹⁰ On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

John the Revelator, as an introduction to his revelation mentions that he “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day....” Why does he bother to mention the title of the day and also connect it with being “in the Spirit”—that is, in a state of worship, and perhaps inspiration? (If you are unclear about the certainty of which day is “The Lord’s Day”, please refer back to the contents of note titled “*The Lord’s Day*”—particularly: *A . Testimony of the Fathers*.)

Sunday or Sabbath? What do the languages tell us?

Sunday, first day of the week. Its English name and its German name (*Sonntag*) are derived from the Latin *dies solis*, “sun’s day,” the name of a pagan Roman holiday. **In the New Testament (see Revelation 1:10) it is called the Lord’s Day (*Dominica* in the Latin version), from which the name of Sunday is derived in Romance languages (French *Dimanche*; Italian *Domenica*; Spanish *Domingo*; Roman *Duminica*).** In the early days of Christianity, Sunday began to replace the Sabbath and to be observed to honor the resurrection of Christ. Sunday was instituted as a day of rest, consecrated especially to the service of God, by the Roman emperor Constantine the Great. Since the 4th century, ecclesiastical and civil legislation has frequently regulated work on Sunday and service attendance. In the United States, laws limiting business activity and amusements on Sundays have become known as blue laws. "Sunday," *Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Saturday, seventh day of the week, named in honor of the Roman god Saturn. In Latin, Saturday was called *dies Saturni*; it was called *Sater-daeg* by the Anglo-Saxons. It is the holy day of the Israelites of the Old Testament and in Hebrew is called Sabbath, the only day of the week with a name, the rest being numbered. The word *sabbath* derives from the Hebrew word meaning “to rest or cease”; the Jews were enjoined from working on the seventh day. It begins at sunset Friday and lasts until sunset Saturday. In the early days of Christianity, the holy day gradually shifted to Sunday, which, as the first day, was deemed more appropriate since it was the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the day on which creation began. In Sweden, however, Saturday is *Lördag*, or Lord’s Day; and in Denmark and Norway it is *Lørdag*. **[Actually, with due credit to Microsoft, *Lørdag*, etc. does not mean "Lord’s Day", but rather is derived from old Nordic language meaning "washing day", as referring to preparation for Sunday.]** In Spanish it is *el sábado* and in Italian *sabato*, both derived from sabbath. Several Christian sects, notably the Seventh-Day Adventist church, have reverted to Old Testament practice and observe Saturday as their day of worship. "Saturday," *Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

It is apparent that while several languages still use their version of “Sabbath” for Saturday, probably all of those same languages also render Sunday as “Lord’s Day”. Thus any assumed authority for keeping the Sabbath based on language is feeble at best.

Sabbath Conclusion

While it is clear that there is no Biblical injunction to observe Sunday *rather than* the Sabbath, it is also

quite clear that those who choose to worship their Jesus upon the day of His resurrection have reasonable Scriptural and substantial historical reason for doing so. It seems apparent to me that there is *at least* as much New Testament support for worshipping on Sunday as there is for the Sabbath. It is my considered opinion that there is tremendously more so.

It is very important to observe that while *worship* on Sunday seems to be sanctioned by both the New Testament and historical evidences, ritual *observance* of Sunday is not even hinted at in the Bible and indeed, is likely the wrong way to approach the day. In other words, none of the requirements of Sabbath observance such as beginning and ending times or religiously abstaining from work, etc., are to be transferred to one's reckoning of how he addresses the day. To carry such requirements and disciplines over from Sabbath to Sunday is to revert to servitude to the law, as Paul abhors in the Galatians. (See Galatians 4:9-11.)

Also, I think the Adventist church flatters the Catholic church far beyond their due. Adventists often obsess over the acknowledged fact that Catholics openly declare their recognition of the seventh-day Sabbath as the biblical day of rest, and that they also assumed the authority to officially transfer the solemnity of Sabbath to Sunday. However, simply because that church system chooses to enforce its hold over its members by means of these various authorities, it does not automatically follow that the reasons the Christian Church at large has selected Sunday as their special day of worship find their cause in that same Catholic decision.

Adventists see only two possible options regarding the Sabbath. Observance, which is obviously the only valid choice for them; or Transference, which is the Catholic heresy. I suggest a third option: Fulfillment. Paul shows that the law was fulfilled *and abolished* by Christ's life and death. In Romans 14:5,6, he states that whatever view a person takes regarding his day of worship is equally valid: **“⁵ One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord...”**

See also Romans 10:3,4.

The state of the dead

There are several passages in the Bible strongly suggesting an inaccuracy of the doctrine of soul-sleep, and also the traditional Adventist view of Hell.

NIV: Matt 22:32

³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

I believe this is evidence suggesting that we continue in a conscious state upon our death. Taking Jesus' argument one logical step further, since the idea of soul-sleep would mean that we essentially cease to exist when we die, then God would still have needed to say either “*I was* the God...” or “*I will be* the God...” If Jesus uses this argument to prove that there is a resurrection, then it seems likely from the grammar used that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are *now* in His presence.

Furthermore, Jesus says “**He is not the God of the *dead* but of the *living*.**” If there is a soul-sleep, then He would again be the God of the dead—*until* they were resurrected, when He could resume being “the God of the living!”

NIV: Luke 16:19-31*The Rich Man and Lazarus*

¹⁹ “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

²² **“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In hell, where he was in [immediate and continuing] torment,** he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

²⁴ So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

²⁵ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

²⁷ “He answered, **‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’**

²⁹ “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

³⁰ “‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

³¹ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

I have seen no feasible way of arguing one’s way out of the truth in this matter. One of the **last** possible stunts I can see Jesus pulling is to use bad theology and doctrine to make a point, however important! If Jesus Himself describes the afterlife in this manner, then I believe it is incumbent upon me to accept it at face value—unless there is some **biblical** reason not to. There isn’t, as far as I can see.

This passage very clearly establishes the biblical position of an immediate ascension to Heaven (or “Abraham’s bosom”, also called “Paradise”, in Sheol prior to Christ’s resurrection) upon the death of the saints. Jesus is telling a story (differentiated by some from a parable because He used names) about two men who die and are taken to their rightful reward. The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them—**so they have gone to their respective places while the rich man’s brothers are still alive upon the earth!**

Also, the rich man is begging Abraham to send Lazarus to come and ease his agony—indicating an immediate and enduring period of misery. As contrary as this runs to my deeply entrenched system of beliefs, it is terribly important not to just discard this passage because it does not happen to fit with my established pattern of thinking. *These are Jesus’ own words here!*

NIV: 2 Cor 5:6-9

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are **at home in the body** we are **away from the Lord.** ⁷ We live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I

say, and would **prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.** ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

This passage certainly seems clear and definite that there is no middle ground—if we are absent from the body, then we are at home with the Lord. There is no interim period of “resting in the ground” suggested. Where it says we are “away from the body and at home with the Lord” cannot, I think, possibly be referring to after the resurrection—then we will have our new, perfect, resurrection bodies. That could not be referred to as being “away from the body”!

Also, “So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.” If we merely sleep in the ground after we die, there can certainly and absolutely be **no** pleasing (or displeasing, for that matter) the Lord. Only the neutrality of non-existence. We can only perform acts and deeds, make decisions, show love and adoration when we are *conscious*! But this text clearly suggests an ability to please the Lord—even when we are *dead*, or away from the body.

NIV: 1 Thes 4:13,14

¹³ Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus** those who have fallen asleep in him.

In spite of the metaphor, doesn't this argue against soul-sleep? How can Jesus bring people *with* Him whose totalities (except their breath) lie in the ground of the earth He is returning to? It is impossible to bring anything *to* the place in which it exists!

NIV: Phil 1:20-25

²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and **to die is gain.** ²² If I am to go on living **in the body**, this will mean fruitful labor for me. **Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!** ²³ I am torn between the two: **I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;** ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that **I remain in the body.** ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

I don't know how *anything* could be more clear from this passage than the certain fact that Paul looked forward to dying . . . **so that he could go—immediately—to be with Christ!** This passage cannot be referring to Christ's return and the resurrection, as there would then be no “choice” involved—no decision to be distressed over. He declares he was torn between his duty to stay and help the fledgling church and his burning desire to depart so that he could see and be with his Saviour!

“I desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is better by far*”. I do not think any sane person, unless life was nothing but sheer torture, would ever feel that to merely decompose in the ground while sleeping the years away could be “*better by far*” than living—even just in this life. Paul had much to live for *here*. He was doing a tremendous work and seeing so much fruit from his labours. That must have been a blessed existence! Sure, he had more than his share of trials and problems—but I cannot believe he would have preferred oblivion to his earthly life. No, it *must* have been the grander and higher calling of seeing Jesus and personally fellowshiping with his Redeemer that were tugging at Paul's loyalties.

Mrs. White and her influence

So many of these discoveries seemed so clear and positive, yet there was still one strong element which kept me long bound in confusion. I kept thinking to myself, “As logical as all of this sounds, haven’t we been given a special end-times messenger who has argued in the strongest possible terms against each of these conclusions? Mrs. White’s stated purpose was to make all of these mysteries clear to us. She is said to have handed us this clarity directly from God Himself.” So, now I had to commit to finding the facts in this final matter. Once I permitted myself to venture into the investigation, I found the truth I discovered to be the key that unlocked all the other apparent conflicts.

I believe this may be the most difficult and painful subject for you to grapple with. If the material that I include below is insufficient to permit you to form a conclusion, there is much, *much* more that may be seen. But most of that additional information is even more painful; so I have limited the material I have chosen to include here to the following. If you need to see more, I can direct you to more information, as necessary.

Please accept this section on the terms it is offered. This is not meant to be an indictment of a personality who has been so loved and meant so much to so many people. It is merely an examination of the facts which have presented themselves to me; and I have sought to understand those facts in light of how they might impact my relationship with God and my understanding of His truth. I am not seeking to slander another Christian, nor to rob you of any comfort you may have found in her words or person. If you choose to reject my views on this subject, that is your choice. If you resent me for appearing to lay an axe at the base of a terribly important pillar in your spiritual life, that is also your option; and I suppose I cannot blame you.

It must be reckoned that the main body of these *unique* doctrines of the SDA church, which I had always thought to accept and believe, rises and falls with the writings, opinions, and authority of Ellen G. White. By their own admission, the church is wholly dependant upon her instruction and influence for justification of its very existence. As John J. Robertson states in his book *The White Truth*, “The influence of the spirit of prophecy is woven into the warp and woof of Adventist faith, life and organization . . . **What we are as a church is a reflection of our faith in the divine authority evident in the writings of Ellen G. White.**” In the *Review & Herald*, Aug 14, 1883, it is said “Our position on the Testimonies is like the keystone of the arch. Take that out, and there is no logical stopping place till all the special truths of the message are gone . . . **Nothing is surer than this, that this message and the visions belong together and stand and fall together.**”

She said she was the modern mouthpiece of God, “In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. **In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit.** There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue. But will they profit by **His teachings?** Will they receive **His reproofs** and heed **His warnings?**” *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 4, pp. 147-148.* “Those who are reproved by the Spirit of God should not rise up against the humble instrument. **It is God, and not an erring mortal, who has spoken** to save them from ruin.” *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 661.* And again, “I am glad that you are having success in selling my books; for thus you are giving to the world **the light God has given me. These books contain clear, straight, unalterable truth** and they should certainly be appreciated. **The instruction they contain is not of human production.**” *Letter H-339, December 26, 1904, White Estate.* She further claimed that all she wrote was insight directly from God. “God was speaking through clay. You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. **In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.**” *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 5, pg 67.*

It follows then, if she is what she claimed to be, that we had better listen and take heed of those things she had to tell us. If, however, there is *any* possibility that she was *not* what she claimed for herself, then I *must* be certain—and if she is found to be less than she claimed, I would be more than foolish to blindly follow her directives. While it is tremendously comforting to have someone to appeal to who has all the answers, I *cannot* continue to believe in someone merely for the sake of preference or personal convenience if the **facts** dictate otherwise.

Therefore, the following section is a gathering of just a very few of the many evidences I have found which I have come to believe successfully refute the validity of E. G. White's testimony. I could fill *many* pages with example after example in each of these following categories, but I shall be as concise as I can and still feel that I have made my point.

White as a basis of doctrine

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.... *Questions on Doctrine*

As we examine the facts, I believe it becomes clear that the church's doctrinal positions are, in fact, largely based on Ellen's writings. Once those positions have been established by her authority, the task then is to "prove" it by the Bible. As is evidenced elsewhere, some of those "proofs" may be quite a stretch. [See reference to Acts 17:30 under the heading: *Miscellaneous Observations* (following), and also the reference to the SDA pamphlet titled *Authoritative Quotations* cited under the heading "*The Lord's Day*"(previous).] If the church did indeed base it's doctrine solely on the Bible, I am pretty sure that I would have no basis for disagreement.

I sincerely wish that the above words were true. I feel sad and lonely to find myself compelled to leave my roots and so many friends behind as I move forward in my search for truth.

The Problem of Plagiarism

The problem of Ellen White's plagiarism is not a new one. I have in my personal files a photocopy of a *front-page* article printed in the *Healdsburg Enterprise* dated March 20, 1889 revealing a saddening and serious potential problem with Ellen's integrity—which apparently existed from the earliest days, *in the public view!* It demonstrated numerous examples of plagiarism, comparing paragraph after paragraph of Mrs. White's material to the works of others from which those paragraphs were clearly "borrowed". Thus it was considered a problem by the *public media* in *her own day*. There was also legal action reportedly brought against her by the co-authors Conybeare and Howson of the book *Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul* from which Mrs. White took page after page—action which was later dropped when that indebted book was suppressed.

Whatever rationale we may employ in an effort to explain this away, if this issue is a real one, then the problem is glaringly obvious: God does not need to copy page after page from other authors' work to express Himself. Furthermore, I cannot listen to someone who does so while claiming them to be God's words, for this is the practice of deception; and I am convinced that God will never connect His work to dishonest tactics.

Lest we accept the theory advanced by the SDA church that she and those of her time operated under a different system of ethics and legal requirements which did not include the necessity of rendering credit to other sources used, (or that she simply did not know any better), let us consider these words from her own

pen: “Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet **the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own**, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, **which I always enclose in marks of quotation**”. *Selected Messages, Bk 1, p. 37*. I have also seen a copy of a letter written by Mrs. White to someone who desired to use some passages from her writings in a work which they were preparing. The primary purpose of this letter was to emphasize the importance of giving her the proper and customary literary credit.

While there are literally *hundreds of pages* of comparisons which could be reproduced here, I will include only two references which I think make my point clear. Additionally, I think it is important to observe that one of the most important and venerated works attributed to Ellen, *The Great Controversy*, is perhaps the most thoroughly fraught with such indebtedness (though by no means is it limited to that one book). One researcher has noted that if proper credit were given for such “borrowed” work in that volume, perhaps upwards of *eighty per cent* would need to be placed in quote marks or have footnotes!

Great Controversy

The bull invited all Catholics to take up the cross against the heretics. In order to stimulate them to this cruel work, it absolved them from all ecclesiastical pains and penalties; it released all who joined the crusade from any oaths they might have taken; it legalized their title to any property which they might have illegally acquired, and promised remission of all their sins to such as should kill any heretic. It annulled all contracts made in favor of the Vaudois, ordered their domestics to abandon them, forbade all persons to give them any aid whatever, and empowered all persons to take possession of their property

p. 83 of *The Great Controversy*

In **the gloom of his dungeon**, John Huss had foreseen **the triumph of true faith**. Returning in his dreams to the humble parish where he had preached the gospel, he saw **the pope and his bishops effacing the pictures of Christ which he had painted on the walls of his chapel. The sight caused him great distress; but the next day he was filled with joy as he beheld many artists busily engaged in replacing the figures in greater numbers and brighter colors. When their work was completed, the painters exclaimed to the immense crowds surrounding them, 'Now let the popes and bishops come! They shall never efface them more!'** Said the reformer as he related his dream, **'I am certain that the image of Christ will never be effaced. They have wished to destroy it, but it shall be painted in all hearts by much better preachers than myself'**

pp 91, 91 of *The Great Controversy*

The bull invited all Catholics to take up the cross against the heretics, and to stimulate them in this pious work, it absolved from all ecclesiastical pains and penalties, general and particular; it released all who joined the crusade from any oaths they might have taken; it legitimized their title to any property they might have illegally acquired, and promised remission of all their sins to such as should kill any heretic. It annulled all contracts made in favor of Vaudois, ordered their domestics to abandon them, forbade all persons to give them any aid whatever, and empowered all persons to take possession of their property

- quoted from an earlier work by Rev. J.A. Wylie entitled *History of the Waldenses*.

One night the holy martyr saw, in imagination, from **the depths of his dungeon, the pictures of Christ that he had painted on the walls of his oratory, effaced by the pope and his bishops. The vision distressed him; but on the next day he saw many painters occupied in restoring these figures in greater numbers and in brighter colors. As soon as their task was ended, the painters, who were surrounded by an immense crowd, exclaimed, 'now let the popes and bishops come! They shall never efface them more' ... 'I am no dreamer,' replied Huss, ' but I maintain this for certain: That the image of Christ will never be effaced. They have wished to destroy it, but it shall be painted afresh in all hearts by much better preachers than myself'**

p 3 of *History of the Reformation* by D'Aubigne.

In Jeremiah 23:30-32, we read, “Therefore,” declares the LORD, “**I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me.**”³¹ Yes,” declares the LORD, “**I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, ‘The LORD declares.’**”³² Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” declares the LORD. “They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least,” declares the LORD. In this context, I find this passage extremely challenging and disturbing!

What if her ideas don’t fit?

Following are just a few examples of writings which stand in contradiction to the Bible, other of her writings, or historical fact. This list is by no means comprehensive!

Historical conflict

In *Early Writings*, p. 75, she says, “I was pointed to some who are in the great error of believing that it is their duty to go to Old Jerusalem, and think they have a work to do there before the Lord comes. . . . I saw that Satan had greatly deceived some in this thing. . . . I also saw that Old Jerusalem never would be built up; and that Satan was doing his utmost to lead the minds of the children of the Lord into these things now, in the gathering time.” In 1948, Israel was re-established as a nation, and obviously since then, “Old Jerusalem” has been *greatly* built up.

In 1862, writing in *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1*, p. 260, she predicted “**This nation** [the United States] **will...be humbled into the dust... When England does declare war** [against the North during the Civil War], all nations will have an interest of their own to serve, and there will be general war, general confusion.” It is clear from history that England did not declare war on the United States, and America was certainly not “humbled into the dust” by them.

Again, in *Early Writings*, p. 67, she declares “**But now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they** [“they who of late have embraced the truth”] **will have to learn in a few months.**” Well over a century has passed. I fully understand and am in complete harmony with the longing expectation of Jesus’ imminent return. But as she was supposed to be speaking under inspiration, what do we conclude here? This *did not occur!*

Finally, in May of 1856 Ellen, while in vision during a meeting in Battle Creek, quoted an angel as saying that some of the 61 members there present would “**remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus.**” *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 1*, pp. 131-132. Even an infant there present could have lived *two full lifetimes* since then.

What if Ellen and the Bible disagree?

According to the Bible, (see Ezekiel 13:6-9 and Deuteronomy 13:1-3) we must reject the message of anyone who claims to be sent of God, but who contradicts the scripture.

She herself declared that: “**The Bible must be your counselor. Study it and the testimonies God has given; for they never contradict His Word.**” *Selected Messages, Bk. 3*, p. 32. If it is found that they do, then I feel I must reject the authority in which they are offered.

Furthermore, “This work is of God, or it is not, God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work...bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter. The testimonies are of the Spirit of God or of the Devil.” *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 4, p. 230.*

I believe that sadly, it seems Mrs. White grew to believe that if a thought or idea occurred to her, it must have been planted in her mind by God Himself. This is not terribly uncommon—but in her person and pen, it found uncommon authority. While it is painful to face the choice her shattering options present us with here, I believe we must accept her own words on the matter. We do indeed bear a burden of examination on these points!

EGW vs The Bible

In the 1900 edition of *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 155, she says, “Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. . . **Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion; should never be taught to say or feel that they are saved.** This is misleading.”

And in *Selected Messages, Vol 1, p. 314*, she adds, “No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words [“I am saved”] till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God. Then, with the utmost propriety, we may give glory to God and to the Lamb for eternal deliverance. As long as man is full of weakness—for of himself he cannot save his soul—he **should never dare to say, ‘I am saved.’**”

Yet Paul states clearly “That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.** ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and **it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.** ¹¹ As the Scripture says, “**Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.**” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**” *Romans 10:9-13* And John says, “And this is the testimony: God **has given us eternal life**, and this life is in his Son. **He who has the Son has life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God **so that you may know that you have** [present tense] **eternal life.**” *1 John 5:11-13*

On another topic; in *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, p. 117*, she states “**The sign, or seal**, of God is revealed in the **observance of the seventh-day Sabbath**, the Lord’s Memorial of creation.” And then in *The Great Controversy, p. 640*, she again says, “Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment **is the seal** of the living God.”

But the Bible says, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, **you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession, to the praise of his glory.” *Ephesians 1:13,14.* And again, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is **God, who also sealed us and gave us the spirit in our hearts** as a pledge” *2 Corinthians 1:21,22* And furthermore, “And do not grieve the **Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed** for the day of redemption” *Ephesians 4:30*

We have seen previously that according to the Bible, while the Sabbath was indeed one of several “seals”, or “signs” given to the Israelites, the seal of God upon *Christians* is His Holy Spirit—not the Sabbath. If you disagree with me, I am totally open to correction. I am sincerely seeking truth

and am not declaring that I have found every answer. I ask you to show me *any* passage of scripture that clearly refers to the Sabbath as any form of seal, or identifier, of God's people—except for the Jews during the period of the “Old Covenant” from the time of Moses until Christ's death. I have searched diligently, and I cannot find it.

In *Early Writings*, p. 261, she states “I saw that as the Jews crucified Jesus, so the nominal churches had crucified these messages [of the Investigative Judgment], and **therefore they have no knowledge of the way into the most holy, and they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there.** Like the Jews, who offered their useless sacrifices, **they offer up their useless prayers** to the apartment which Jesus has left; and Satan, pleased with the deception, assumes a religious character, and leads the minds of these **professed Christians** to himself . . .”

Paul says in Romans 8:26,27, “²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.” The Spirit translates our faltering and inadequate knowledge of our own needs into the most meaningful language of Heaven! Surely any sincere prayer is heard by Jesus and stirs His tender love—wherever He may be! The Bible repeatedly stresses that the condition of our prayers being heard is the attitude of our heart—not the address which we use to send them. *Please think this through!* The message of the above passage from *Early Writings* is preposterous!

The Bible clearly declares itself to be **the** fully sufficient way to salvation. Since Scripture does *not*, without the additive help of Mrs. White, describe or explain the Investigative Judgement, we must *at least question* Ellen's statement that no Christians except SDA's have access to Jesus' saving work. Nowhere in the Scriptures can I find it even *hinted* that there will come another key which must be used to gain salvation. In fact, it strongly warns against adding *anything* to the words which were wrapped up in the cannon of scripture many centuries ago.

As to the question of who qualifies for His attention, in 1 John 5:1 we read: “**Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.**” “Whoever” includes *you!*

2300 Days

This “Investigative Judgement” is possibly the most important and unique doctrine which Ellen White has established. It depends finally upon her interpretation of Daniel's prophecy of the 2300 days, and is closely related to the “Great Disappointment” of 1844. I am not a scholar of prophecy, but I have reached some conclusions about this matter which I would urge you to consider.

I can imagine that the people of the movement which created the frenzied expectations of 1844 had invested so much of themselves, and had committed so much of their credibility, to the study resulting in their interpretation of this prophecy, that they *could not* simply walk away from it. They had made such direct declarations about it that it *had* to mean *something!*

However, with but some very elementary exegesis of the text of this prophecy in Daniel, we find that the words used for “days” (see Daniel 8:13,14) pre-suppose use only in the context of a *literal* day. Two words are actually used:

ערב, >ereb, *eh'-reb*; from 6150; dusk:— + day, even (-ing, tide), night.

בוקר, boqer, *bo'-ker*; from 1239; prop. dawn (as the break of day); generally morning:— (+) day, early, morning, morrow. James Strong, *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words*

It is not this word: **יומ, yowm**, *yome*; from an unused root meaning to be hot; a day (as the warm hours), whether lit. (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or fig. (a space of time defined by an associated term), . . . year . . . James Strong, *New Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words*

This is the word used in other instances where days may be exchanged for years in a prophetic sense. (see Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5) It is easy to comprehend the misunderstanding of this and other issues that relate to language misinterpretation issues. Mrs. White and other Adventist leaders of this period did not have access to resources which allowed them to perform exegesis/hermeneutics on these texts. As far as I know, they only had a couple of versions of the Bible—in English—and could only take the words as they were translated at face value.

Additionally, consider this from the *King James Version Bible Commentary*:

The vision then turned to hear a question—How long should this sanctuary desolation continue with the interruption of the daily sacrifice? The answer was for 2300 days, or nearly six and one half years. **Theories that transform these days into years depart radically from both literal hermeneutics and sound biblical interpretation.** Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. **This has no reference to a supposed heavenly temple, but clearly refers to the actual Jewish Temple cleansing that took place in 165 B.C. or 164 B.C. by the Maccabees.** This occurred on the twenty-fifth day of Chislev, or the Jewish December. One day's supply of oil miraculously kept the golden lampstand burning for eight days. That cleansing has been celebrated ever after by the Jews as the Feast of Dedication (Jn 10:22), also called Hanukkah today.

So it seems that this prophecy applied only to real *days* and this prophecy was fulfilled at just the right time.

Finally, as to the import of this matter, observe this statement of truth by noted Adventist leader and historian LeRoy E. Froom in his book *Movement of Destiny*, p. 542: “Indeed, if there is no actual Sanctuary in heaven, and no ministering Great High Priest serving therein; and **if there is no Judgment Hour message** to herald from God to mankind at this time, **then we have no justifiable place in the religious world, no distinctive denominational mission and message, no excuse for functioning as a separate church entity today.**”

She often contradicted herself

In a publication titled *An Appeal to Youth* (1864), she made this startling statement, “God loves honest-hearted children, but **cannot love** those who are dishonest.... The Lord loves those little children **who try to do right**, and He has promised that they shall be in His kingdom. **But wicked children God does not love....** When you feel tempted to speak impatient and fretful, remember the Lord sees you, **and will not love you if you do wrong.**”

But twenty-eight years later, in the *Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1892, she says, “Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong; teach them that He loves them so that it grieves His tender Spirit to see them in transgression.”

As J. Mark Martin, former SDA minister and PUC graduate, notes on his web page: “Mrs. White taught that the *door* of salvation, or *probation* as she referred to it, had forever shut for the world in 1844. In a letter to Joseph Bates, Mrs White refers to the fact **by recounting her vision** to a group of Adventists, she **persuaded them to believe that the door of mercy was shut:**

“**At the time I had the vision of the midnight cry** I had given it up in the past and thought it future, as also most of the band had.... **After I had the vision** and God gave me light, he bade me deliver it to the band, but I shrank from it. I was young, and I thought they would not receive it from me. . . . The view about the Bridegroom’s coming I had about the middle of February, 1845, while in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others. Many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand... The Lord worked in mighty power, setting the truth home to their hearts.... **Most of them received the vision, and were settled upon the shut door.** *Letter B-3, 1847: Letter to Joseph Bates, July 13, 1847, White Estate.*

“In his 1847 publication, *A Word to the “Little Flock,”* page 22, James White recounts this experience:

“**When she received her first vision,** Dec. 1844, she and all the band in Portland, Maine, (where her parents then resided) *had given up the* midnight-cry, and shut door, as being in the past. **It was then that the Lord shew [sic] her in vision, the error into which she and the band in Portland had fallen.** She then related her vision to the band, and about sixty confessed their error, and acknowledged their 7th month experience to be the work of God.

“On March 24, 1849, Mrs. White clearly states that her vision taught her that the door of salvation was shut. She warns the faithful not to allow their faith in the shut door to be shaken by the apparent conversion of sinners since 1844.

“**I was shown** that the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, relating to the shut door, could not be separated.... I saw that the mysterious signs and wonders and false reformations would increase and spread. The reformations that were shown me were not reformations from error to truth, but from bad to worse, for those who professed a change of heart had only wrapped about them a religious garb, which covered up the iniquity of a wicked heart. Some appeared to have been really converted, so as to deceive God’s people, but if their hearts could be seen they would appear as black as ever. My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked, but could not see it, **for the time for their salvations is past.** *Present Truth, pp.21-22, August, 1849.*

“She denies having a vision confirming the Shut Door

“For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. **This position was taken before my first vision** was given me. **It was the light given me of God that corrected our error,** and enabled us to see the true position. *Selected Messages, Vol. 1, p. 63.*

“With my brethren and sisters, after the time passed in forty-four I did believe no more sinners would be converted. **But I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted.** And am clear and free to state no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in the charges they have made against me upon this point. *Selected Messages, Vol 1, p. 74.*”

This is startling material, but it is fact. It may be researched and proven.

But what about her visions?

One of the strongest arguments in favour of Ellen's credibility as a prophet is the many visions which she had. I believe these were actual experiences which she genuinely believed (at least at first) were "messages" from a divine source. However, there is an overwhelming preponderance of contemporary and modern evidence which demonstrates very natural causes for these experiences.

I could easily launch into a very lengthy series of quotes from various medical sources which clearly show that her "visions" were the result of **known** medical conditions that resulted largely from her childhood injuries. These medical evidences are gleaned both from her attending physicians who personally observed her condition, and from medical journals and textbooks/encyclopedias. In the interest of saving space, I will not include those references here. If you need to examine these for yourself, I am more than willing to share what I have discovered with you.

If she wasn't really what she said she was, how did she write such wonderful things?

Sadly, even the Adventist Church cannot any longer deny that Mrs. White plagiarised much of her material. (They will use softer words, such as "selected" and "borrowed".) Therefore, most of the material which she copied, (and unfortunately that was a massive amount of "her" writings), was taken from material which was written by Christian authors. Fortunately, much of the material she borrowed was taken from men who appear to have been sincere and insightful men of God. While their opinions were usually offered as opinions and observations, she frequently offered them to us as edicts from God.

I recognize these possibilities are likely difficult for you to accept. I have offered them as my opinions—they do not have to be yours. They do however, fit with what the evidences I have discovered have shown me.

NIV: Matt 24:11

¹¹ **and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.**

We have for many years applied this text to the likes of Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy and others. Does this apply to Mrs. White? If she was not actually inspired as she claimed to be, then it is our painful duty to admit that it does.

Miscellaneous observations

Following are a few miscellaneous observations pertaining to the Adventist system and its methodology.

NIV: Mark 7:19

¹⁸ “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? ¹⁹ For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)

CEV: Rom 14:14

¹⁴ The Lord Jesus has made it clear to me that God considers all foods fit to eat. But if you think some foods are unfit to eat, then for you they are not fit.

This seems to be strong evidence against the Adventist position on “unclean meats.”

Adventists will *tell* you they hold their views on unclean foods solely for health reasons and not for doctrinal or moral ones. In practice however, it becomes a moral issue. It is surely considered a *sin* to eat anything on Moses’ list of unclean meats. This is evidenced by the many stories I would commonly hear as a child such as one lauding some Adventist missionary who, when imprisoned in a Asian concentration camp was afforded only pork for food. Rather than violate his conscience, he starved *and died!!* This was seen by himself and those relating the story as an act of great courage and sacrifice in the face of overwhelming “temptation.” I tremendously admire his amazing discipline and grand intentions! He obviously believed this was the “right thing to do.” As Paul admonishes here in Romans, we must not tread upon another’s conscience even in this matter. If a person believes it is wrong to do a thing, then to him it is wrong. So we have no right to judge—but it seems such a shame to live in bondage to such petty matters when Jesus and Paul have made it so clear that it is unnecessary.

Misleading Use of Scripture Passages

NIV: Acts 17:30

³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

I studied this to see if there could be any possible connection to the Sabbath. Dwight Nelson, a prominent SDA evangelist used it as one.

At the very best, this is an enormous stretch—there is certainly no connection, explicit or implicit, between this text and the sabbath issue. This text is talking about idol worship. At worst, this could be *intentionally* misleading. As there is no connection from this verse to the Sabbath; then to take this text so radically out of context as to twist it into an argument for the Sabbath is so far reaching that the person so doing *must* be aware that he is venturing into the arena of deceit.

When attempting to support an argument which Adventists firmly believe, based on what Ellen wrote on the topic, but which has a weak **scriptural** foundation; and when endeavouring to explain their position, or *sell their position*, to someone who has had no indoctrination which would compel him to embrace Ellen’s perspective for Ellen’s sake, employing out-of-context references like this may appear to be the only option available. I have heard it said that to take a text out of context leaves you with a con!

NKJV: 2 Cor 11:3

³ But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the **simplicity** that is in Christ.

I believe the “serpent” still strives to corrupt our hearts and minds from the beautiful simplicity of the gospel and full message of Christ. When we need to expound and pontificate at great length to try to make a point of doctrine believable, then we are straying from the real message that Christ left for us. I believe that the *full* message of salvation is so plain that the simpleton and the small child can understand it. If we must create long and convoluted arguments to explain why our position makes sense—particularly when we must try to explain why several plain passages of scripture don’t mean what it is clear to anyone else that they *do* mean to make that position plausible—then we have probably ventured into the realm of error.

This is a point I have noticed as regards many Adventist apologists. There are many points on which they have fairly logical-sounding explanations . . . if you listen long enough. I cite the SDA Bible Commentary, Samuele Bacchiocchi, and even Ellen White as examples. If you follow a line of thinking through enough twists and turns, you may finally lose sight of the original contrary defense so that the explanation offered makes some degree of sense to you. But this kind of reasoning is dangerous. I can recall a special after-school session in my high-school Algebra class when we, students *and teacher*, created about two pages of formula that seemed to mathematically “prove” that two plus two equalled *five!* Now simplicity will show us clearly that two plus two does *not* equal five! But we checked and re-checked our complex formula. Each time it appeared to check out. Thus, I think it can be intellectually stimulating and entertaining, but theologically and *relationally* devastating to engage in these “scholarly gymnastics.” Therefore, when someone has to spend much time and great effort to convince you of how his position *does* make sense, and how it *actually does* fit with the Bible—**be wary!**

Of course there *are* mysteries in the Bible. Naturally there are topics that require great study to understand. In fact, there are numerous *details* about which I believe it is absolutely impossible to form a concrete conclusion or an air-tight argument. But I believe that God has made easily understood each of the issues which He knows are crucial to our salvation and well-being.

NIV: Gal 4:16-18

¹⁶ **Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?**

¹⁷ **Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them.** ¹⁸ **It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good,**

I hope I have not “become your enemy by telling you [what I firmly believe to be] the truth”.

I believe vss. 17 & 18 apply to the main of the Adventist mission. They do indeed have a zeal that is to be admired—particularly in view of the position of unpopularity their message often forces them into. But, as Paul here intimates, is the zeal for good or for bad? Is the zeal for a cause or mission that truly matters? Does it turn every soul who takes it up to a more continuous gaze upon the One Who is the only Subject in the universe that really matters—Jesus Christ?!

I am sorry to state that it is my considered opinion that the Adventist zeal all too frequently turns people’s hearts and energies much more toward divisiveness and controversy. Far too often, Adventist witnesses are much more concerned with whether a person has the ‘right *code*’ than if that person is equipped to pursue a *relationship* with Jesus Christ, and to properly study the Bible to accomplish that endeavour.

Jesus prayed that He desired for all of His followers to have a unity and singleness of thought and purpose— an intimate fellowship. Jesus is returning to receive His bride, not a harem. Surely, this

controversy over what seems to amount to doctrinal hair-splitting—in the light of a balanced evaluation of *all* of the evidence—is, and was, not at all what Christ wanted for His church.

It is true that He said He came to bring a sword and to set brother against brother, etc. But this was surely over much more significant matters than the aforementioned “observing special days and months and seasons and years!”

Conclusion

Finally, all of this left me with some frightening decisions to make. Probably the most challenging of my entire life! It is difficult to change one’s convictions—especially those which have been cherished and guarded from attack for years. But, as I have said earlier, opinions are no match for facts—regardless of who we have learned those opinions from. If those opinions are even *possibly* in contrast with the straight teaching of the Bible, then it falls to our duty to check it out.

Obviously, though each of these positions makes sense to me and seems to fit with what I believe the Bible to be telling me, not every defense is 100% air-tight. But neither do they fall under their own weight. These are my beliefs and opinions based upon what I believe the Bible (alone) is telling me through prayerful study. You are entitled to your own views—but please don’t cling to those which are in obvious contrast to the Word of God.

I am not in a position of hatred or bitterness toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I have many warm, safe memories connected to it. I admire the overwhelming sincerity of many of its people. I believe there are many true Christians within its membership. But I am also convinced they are carrying a great deal of unnecessary doctrinal baggage and a tremendous burden of inaccurate thinking because of the misappropriation of authority by Ellen White and those who used her as a mouthpiece for their ideas.

Since I cannot accept so many of the Church’s positions and tenets, I cannot continue to be identified as a part of it.