

What Seventh-Day Adventists Should Know About Other Sabbath-keepers

As a Christian who keeps Saturday as the Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset), I am sometimes a source of bewilderment to others not familiar with my beliefs. They persistently think that I am either a Jew or a Seventh-day Adventist. I am neither. But in the eyes of many, these are the only religions observing the Seventh-Day Sabbath.

Most people have heard of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews. The well-known Seventh-day Adventists number in the millions. Yet most Seventh-day Adventists know little or nothing of the hundreds of other Sabbath-keeping groups who believe the Messiah has come. For a listing, with addresses and in many cases a summary of their distinctive doctrines, write for the *Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups*, from the **Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718.**

Seventh-day Adventists should know more about others who hold very similar beliefs. Their fellow Sabbath-keepers live in the same communities as Adventists, yet in many cases neither knows about the existence of the other.

Both know little about the doctrinal beliefs or the history of the other. This is really not too surprising. The typical Protestant or Catholic knows little about the history and doctrines of his own denomination, let alone that of another. Few will bother to know what their church believes, fewer still will find out what others believe.

I have written extensively on Sabbatarian history and have closely examined Adventist doctrine, as well as that of many other Sabbath-observing groups. There are very sincere and dedicated Seventh-day Adventists.

I share many beliefs with Adventists. Yet they are lacking in two areas: (1) Adventists need to know their own history, and (2) Adventists need to know their fellow Sabbath-keepers and their doctrines.

Unknown History

The oldest continuously organized and operating Christian Sabbath-keeping church, the Mill Yard Church in London, England, is not, and never was, Seventh-day Adventist. The first Christian Sabbath-keeper on the

American continent came about 200 years before there was a Seventh-day Adventist. The first Sabbath-keeping settler in the Oregon country was not an Adventist either.

There has never been a time since the Seventh-day Adventist church was formed in the 1860s that all Christian Sabbath-keepers were in their fold. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not the only descendant of the Adventist movement led by the Sunday-keeping William Miller in the 1840s. The largest non-SDA body of Sabbath-keepers, the various Churches of God, were not an “offshoot” of the Seventh-day Adventists, but existed long before the SDA denomination was formed. They parted company over the visions of Ellen G. White and various other doctrinal views.

I urge that my SDA friends read my two books: *History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Volume I*, and *Six Papers on the History of the Church of God*, available from: **Giving & Sharing, PO Box 100, Neck City, Missouri 64849**. The SDA Loma Linda and James Andrews Universities have requested these books.

Regretfully, the history of SDA’s and non-SDA’s has been marked by much dissension and mutual name-calling. SDA official writings have denounced those in the Church of God as “fanatics” and “rebels,” who in turn denounced Ellen G. White’s visions as from the devil. Her husband James White referred to Church of God people as “bold slanderers” and “baptized liars.”

But then there are many Sabbath-keepers who have never had close relationships historically or doctrinally with SDA’s. The Seventh Day Baptists were the first Sabbatarian settlers of the New World. Some of the Adventists learned about the Sabbath from a Seventh Day Baptist lady in New Hampshire. Seventh-day Adventists and

Seventh Day Baptists continue to be the two best known long-established Sabbath-keeping groups. However, Church of God leader H.E. Carver of the Marion, Iowa, Church of God Seventh Day, in a letter written in the February 8, 1872, *Seventh Day Baptist Sabbath Recorder*, noted that at that time there were “hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Sabbath-keepers scattered over the land, from the Atlantic coast to the shores of the Pacific, who do not belong either to your church organization [SDB’s], or that of the Seventh-day Adventists. Some of these are lonely ones, having no church privileges.”

This is even more true today. But it is a fact not well-known among Seventh-day Adventists.

Overview of Major Sabbath-Keeping Groups

Here is a brief outline of *some* of the major Messianic Sabbatarian groups, broken down in broad classifications:

(1) **Seventh Day Baptists** number about 5,000 in the USA, and over 50,000 overseas. Their USA headquarters is in Janesville, Wisconsin. The oldest SDB church, the Mill Yard church in London, England, dates back at least to the 1600s. SDB churches have considerable local autonomy. Their first church in America was organized in 1671 in Newport, Rhode Island. Their magazine, *The Sabbath Recorder*, started in 1844 and is still being published. SDB’s are much like other Baptists doctrinally, but keep the Sabbath. There are independent SDB groups as well.

(2) **Seventh-day Adventists** number over 12.9 million (2005) with nearly a million members in North America. The Church adds almost a million members a year, and doubles in size every 12 years. They easily dwarf all other Sabbatarian groups in sheer size. Their hospitals, colleges and universities, publishing houses, literature, radio and television, make them well-known. Their teaching on vegetarianism is well-known, but few know of their other teachings which differ from mainline Protestants (man is mortal, the dead sleep, immortality will be conferred upon the righteous at Christ’s second coming, the millennium in heaven).

(3) The **Church of God** numbers from 300,000-500,000. This broad classification

includes those who trace their history back to Sabbath-keeping Adventists (not SDA’s) who did not go along with the visions of Ellen G. White. Seventh Day Churches of God have never been united in one organization comparable to that of SDA’s. Their history has been characterized by local autonomous groups, and splits into factions when groups did organize.

(a) Church of God (Seventh Day) is a subgroup of dozens of independent groups, the largest of which is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. This grouping is the subject of my books on Church history. The Denver group has about 6,000 North American members and 100,000 overseas. It publishes the *Bible Advocate* (began in 1863 as *The Hope of Israel*) and is organized into conferences of local churches similar to that of Adventists. Major distinguishing beliefs are: annual observance of the Lord’s Supper, abstinence from unclean meats, a Wednesday crucifixion, Sabbath resurrection of Christ (three days and three nights in the tomb), the millennium on the earth, the Holy Spirit not a Trinity but the mind and power of God, and nonobservance of Christmas and Easter. Some of the other headquarters of Church of God (Seventh Day) groups are Meridian, Idaho; Salem, West Virginia; Caldwell, Idaho; and Jerusalem, Israel. Tens of thousands of local Church of God believers in Africa (Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana primarily), India, the Philippines, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, are affiliated, but not solidly tied to any organization. Beliefs vary. Some keep the Biblical Holy Days, some do not, etc.

(b) The **Worldwide Church of God** and its offshoot groups is a large and well-known Sabbath-keeping body other than SDA’s. At one time, the parent organization had over 100,000 members, but in the mid 1990s, splits had reduced its membership by 60% or more. Founded by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1933-34, the WWC had a worldwide coverage due to its *World Tomorrow* television program, and large circulation *The Plain Truth* magazine. It had offices and churches in many countries, and is controlled centrally from Pasadena, California. Herbert Armstrong was ordained by the Church of God (Seventh-Day) and was ousted from them in 1937 over his doctrines of Anglo-Israelism and Biblical Holy Days (ideas which

some in the Seventh Day Church of God had held long before him, and which many continued to hold who were never associated with him). The Worldwide Church of God's classical distinctive teachings were: belief in the Holy Days described in the Old Testament, that the United States and the British Commonwealth are mainly the descendants of Israel, in the three tithes described in the Old Testament, non-observance of holidays such as Christmas and Easter, and abstinence from pork and shellfish. After Armstrong's death in 1986, the Church had abandoned its "Anglo-Israel" teaching, accepted the Trinity doctrine, rejected the Biblical requirement to observe the Sabbath and Holy Days, and approved eating unclean meats. Its classical doctrines were continued by offshoots such as the United Church of God, Living Church of God, Philadelphia Church of God, Church of God, International, and Intercontinental Church of God.

Since its inception, numbers have left Armstrong's organization, but until the late 1960s, the Worldwide Church was growing rapidly. There were major splits in the period of 1974-1978, climaxed by the ouster of Herbert Armstrong's own son, Garner Ted Armstrong, who for years was the radio and TV voice of the *World Tomorrow*. Garner Ted led the much smaller Intercontinental Church of God until his death in 2003, after being himself ousted from his own Church of God, International, because of public revelation of his sexual improprieties. Many former Worldwide ministers broke away and started various smaller independent groups. In the mid-1990s, major doctrinal changes led to the formation of the United Church of God and the Global Church of God (later, the Living Church of God).

(4) **Sacred Name Assemblies** all told may number perhaps 50,000 worldwide. This classification of Sabbath-keeping groups is distinguished by their insistence that the Hebrew names for God (Yahweh or Yahvah, etc.) and Jesus Christ (Yahshua Messiah, etc.) must be used exclusively, rather than the English terms, which they label as "pagan." The term "assembly" rather than "church" is used. Most groups observe the Biblical Holy Days, but usually with a calendar other than the one used by most Jews. Otherwise, they have much similarity to their ancestors, the

Church of God (Seventh-Day).

The largest Sacred Name group is the *Assemblies of Yahweh*, Bethel, Pennsylvania, headed by Jacob O. Meyer since the late 1960s. His *Sacred Name Broadcast* radio program and *Sacred Name Broadcaster* magazine have wide coverage. "Yahwists," as they call themselves (rather than "Christians") are even more prone to local independence and splits than the Church of God (Seventh-Day). In the early 1980s, Donald Mansager led a major defection from Meyer's group and formed what later became known as Yahweh's New Covenant Assembly headquartered in Missouri. They publish *Light* magazine. Many other Sacred Name groups have existed from the 1930s to the present. Historical leaders were C.O. Dodd (a former Seventh Day Church of God elder), and A.B. Traina, who wrote a Sacred Name Bible. See my short history of Sacred Name groups in Volume II of *History of the Seventh-Day Church of God*, available from Giving & Sharing.

(5) **Pentecostal Sabbatarian Groups.**

"Pentecostal" is a term referring to fiery, charismatic preaching and sometimes to "speaking in tongues." Pentecostal-type churches exist in the Church of God and Sacred Name groups. Here covered specifically are groups unrelated to the above. Two well-known groups are:

(a) Church of God and Saints of Christ was founded in 1896 by a Negro cook on the Santa Fe Railroad, William S. Crowdy, who claimed to have visions from God. This group keeps the Biblical Holy Days and has a center in Cleveland, Ohio. Membership is said to be around 40,000.

(b) Church of God, Jerusalem Acres, is a Sabbath-keeping descendent of Pentecostalist A.J. Tomlinson's work in the early 1900s. It has about 1,000 members in America and 6,000 overseas, with headquarters in Cleveland, Tennessee.

(6) **Other Sabbath-keeping Groups.**

Like Heinz, there are more than 57 varieties of Sabbath-keeping groups. I can't list all the groups here. The *Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups* is updated every few years by the Bible Sabbath Association, a nondenominational association founded in 1945 to promote fellowship and co-operation between all Sabbath-keepers and the worldwide restoration of the seventh-day Sabbath. Its magazine,

The Sabbath Sentinel, contains articles from Sabbath-keepers of many faiths. Its President is a former Seventh-day Adventist, its secretary-treasurer is from the Church of God (Seventh Day), and several of its presidents have been former members of the Worldwide Church of God.

Seventh-day Adventists should write the **Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718**, to obtain the *Directory* and the *Sabbath Sentinel*, and learn more about their Sabbath-keeping neighbors.

Seventh-day Adventists: there are many others out there who also keep the Sabbath!

Several years ago my wife was being “bothered” by various religious workers who appeared on our front door step. A bit peeved, she wanted to politely get them to leave. “We’re not interested,” she said, “we are Sabbath-keepers!” This got rid of most, except the time when the evangelizers were Seventh-day Adventists! Here we were, Sabbath-keepers in the same community, and we didn’t

even know each other! Can’t we know each other and respect each other’s differences? Or will we instead pull into our religious cocoon and be unaware of anyone outside our group?

It is sad but true, that often as I meet and talk with other Sabbatharians, that I know more of their history and doctrines than they do themselves. It must be that their church group is merely a social club, not the most important activity on earth. This article is not just for Seventh-day Adventists; it is for all Sabbath-keepers. Know what you believe, and why! Don’t be totally ignorant of your Sabbatarian cousins. Realize that we can all learn from each other. Yes, we are all different. But then there will come a time when we shall all see eye to eye!

— written by Richard C. Nickels

This article was originally published as Study No. 63.

We are Sabbath-Keepers, Not Seventh-Day Adventists

When friends and associates find out that I observe the Saturday Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown), they almost invariably peg me as a Seventh-day Adventist. When I tell them I am a Sabbath-keeper of the Church of God category, they draw a complete blank. Like Seventh-day Adventists, most people know little of the existence of other Sabbath-keepers. (Write for our articles on the Sabbath, and the books, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Volume I*, and *Six Papers on the History of the Church of God*.)

Well, there are about half a million other Sabbath-keepers besides Adventists, and they have doctrinal beliefs that are distinct in many ways from SDA's. I can't speak for all of these Sabbatarians, but I can explain how we are in some ways similar, in other ways different, and why I am not a Seventh-day Adventist.

These We Also Believe

First, it would be proper to mention beliefs we have in common with Seventh-Day Adventists:

(1) We believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and seek to pattern our life according to the Bible, looking for the imminent soon-coming return of the Lord.

(2) We believe that the Bible Sabbath (Saturday) is to be kept by Christians today. Christ kept the Sabbath and there is not a single text in the Bible showing that Christ authorized a change of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first.

(3) We accept the Bible literally as the inspired Word of God, Who has preserved the received text down through the ages.

(4) We believe that God created the world in six literal days and that the fossil record with coal beds and oil strata are proof of a great global catastrophe, a flood.

(5) We believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, the Son of God.

(6) We believe that believers should be baptized by immersion.

(7) Salvation is by grace alone, through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. No one can "work his way" into the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, "faith without works is dead." Keeping the commandments is the result, the evidence, of salvation, showing that we love God, **I John 5:3**.

(8) Christ is coming soon, personally, as He went away, **Acts 1:11**. His coming will climax global political and religious events,

which will involve the entire population of the world and mark the end of the age. The graves of all God's children will be opened, the "dead in Christ" will rise, and all true Christians alive at that moment will be "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," **I Thessalonians 4:16-17**. The immortal saints will then reign with Christ a thousand years.

(9) After the millennium, the wicked will be resurrected and judged, and the incorrigibly wicked will receive eternal death. The New Jerusalem on earth will be set up following the purification of the earth by fire and its recreation by Christ into the eternal home of His redeemed. There will be no more death or sorrow, in this "heaven on earth."

(10) Signs of Christ's coming are the nuclear holocaust potential, wars, combines of nations, an unprecedented increase of knowledge, **Daniel 12:4**, moral decadence, and lack of spiritual power, **II Timothy 3**.

(11) The body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit." Use of tobacco and harmful foods such as swine's flesh, will weaken our physical bodies, hindering our service to the Lord.

(12) We are opposed to religious legislation such as Sunday "blue" laws, and vigorously support religious freedom and separation of church and state.

(13) We agree on the state of the dead, that man of himself is mortal, subject to death. Only Christ can make man immortal, and this will not happen until the resurrection, at Christ's return. The ancient supposition that people go to heaven or hell immediately upon

death is an infiltration of pagan mythology into Christian theology. The Bible shows that the dead “sleep” until the glorious return of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

(14) The ministry in the Church are “pastors,” “elders,” “evangelists,” etc., and are to be servants rather than overlords (dictators). They are not to be given a title applicable only to God, such as “reverend.”

(15) God is to be given the tithe, the tenth of our increase, and in addition, offerings as we are able, as He prospers us.

(16) Representing Jesus in our attire, we must exercise modesty and simplicity in dress, and refrain from excessive ornamentation as taught in **I Timothy 2:9-10; I Peter 3:3-4; Isaiah 3:16-21**.

(17) We must honor Christ in our selection of reading, conversation, and associates, and must separate ourselves from worldliness, **II Corinthians 6:17; I John 2:15; James 1:27, 4:4**.

(18) Footwashing, the “ordinance of humility,” was instituted and commanded by the Savior as a preparation for the communion service, **John 13:12-15**.

On This We Disagree

The above items of agreement I took from SDA literature. I’m sure there are many other areas with which we agree with Seventh-day Adventists. However, there are material differences that make it very uncomfortable for me to attend SDA church services. Looking at it objectively, I find the differences outnumber the similarities.

The Spirit of Prophecy

The visions and writings of Ellen G. White are held by SDA’s as divinely inspired. I cannot accept this because the visions are often self-contradictory and against the Scriptures. This is a major reason why I do not feel comfortable attending an SDA church. At the 100th annual SDA camp meeting in Oregon, the ministers seemed to quote Ellen G. White as much as the Bible. This is very repugnant to us.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the writings of Mrs. White are the testimony of Jesus and the “Spirit of prophecy,” **Revelation 19:10**, and as such are equal with the Bible.

One cannot separate SDA’s and Ellen G. White: “Nothing is surer than this, that this message and the visions [of Mrs. White] belong together, and stand or fall together,” *Review and Herald*, Supplement, August 14, 1883. SDA’s further state that her writings should “be received, the same as were the messages of the prophets of old. As Samuel was a prophet to Israel in his day, as Jeremiah was a prophet to Israel in the day of captivity, as John the Baptist came as a special messenger of the Lord to prepare the way of Christ’s appearing, so we believe that Mrs. White was a prophet to the church of Christ today. And the same as the messages of the prophets were received in old days, so her messages should be received at present times,” *Review and Herald*, October 4, 1928.

Mrs. White claimed infallibility and sole leadership in the church. “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 views. They are what God has opened to me in vision — the precious ray of light shining from the throne,” *Testimonies*, Volume 5, page 67. “If you lessen the confidence of God’s people in the testimonies [EGW’s visions] He has sent them, you are rebelling against God,” *Testimonies*, Volume 5, page 66. In *Early Writings*, pages 258-261, she says that anyone who found fault or tried to examine the platform of her teachings was “fighting against” God. “In ancient times God spake to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the Testimonies of His Spirit . . . The Lord has seen fit to give me a view of the needs and errors of His people. . . One stood by my side, and said: ‘God has raised you up, and has given you words to speak to people and to reach hearts, and He has given to no other one’,” *Testimonies*, Volume 5, pages 661, 667.

Compare this with **Hebrews 1:1-2**.

To say that one can be a good Seventh-day Adventist, and not believe that the writings of Ellen G. White are equal with the Bible, is to deny the foundation of their church organization. In the first *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*, published in 1932, one of the twenty-one questions ministers were to ask every candidate for baptism and church membership was: “Do you believe the Bible

doctrine of 'spiritual gifts' in the church, and do you believe in the gift of the Spirit of prophecy which has been manifested in the remnant church through the ministry and writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White?" page 78. The visions were (1860s) and are (presently) a test of fellowship.

Ellen G. White suppressed all others who claimed revelation or divine leading while she herself assumed exclusive leadership, *Testimonies* Volume 1, pages 206-207. Compare this with **Joel 2:27-28; Acts 13:1, 21:8-10; I Corinthians 14:29-31** where it shows that sons and daughters, many, will prophesy of God.

As we will soon show, Ellen G. White's errors and contradictions are an SDA albatross. Why do they cling to her? Because of the need for an authoritative voice in the midst of prevailing religious confusion.

"With the prevailing confusion in the Christian world as to doctrine and practice, the need of a divinely chosen instrumentality, pointing out the way of truth to bewildered men and women, is most obvious. True, the Bible points the way. But even so, in the field of religion today it is 'lo here' and 'lo there,' until men are bewildered with the Babel of tongues. An authoritative voice, or divine oracle, to point the way out from the numberless bypaths of error to the fundamental teaching of the word of God is manifestly needed in these times when the full gospel light is to shine and prepare the waiting church to meet her coming King," *Signs of the Times*, August 13, 1935.

The Spirit of the living God is the only true divine oracle. Read **John 7:17**. Ellen G. White has been dead since 1915, and her spiritual guidance is confined to her writings. SDA's have recognized no other prophet or prophets. Is it not strange that God would pour out His Spirit in the last days only upon one woman and manifest the "gift of prophecy" only for the lifetime of one woman?

Cataloging all of the errors of Mrs. White would indeed be a long and laborious task. Only ONE proven error is enough to demonstrate that she was not inspired of God. A large percentage of what she writes is not flagrantly in error; but because of the claims she has made, she does not allow herself any errors at all. The whole platform of SDA teachings hinges on whether or not she is

100% accurate.

1856 Vision Proven False

In 1856, Mrs. White stated, "I was shown the company present at the conference. Said the angel: 'Some food for worms, some subject to the last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus,'" *Testimonies*, Volume I, page 131. Everyone present in that meeting is now dead. If it had been God talking to her through one of His angels, He would certainly have known who would still be alive at Christ's return. There are no conditions for the fulfillment of this prophecy. You be the judge of whether or not she is true. Read **Deuteronomy 18:20-22**.

When Advent people and Mrs. White were disappointed in 1844 because Jesus did not come as they had thought, they revised their interpretation of certain prophecies. The date was not wrong, they reasoned, but the significance attached to the 1844 date had been "misunderstood." Mrs. White says in *Great Controversy*, 1927 edition page 546, "In 1844, attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest entered the holy of holies, and there appears in the presence of God, to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man, to perform the work of investigative judgment, and to make atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits."

This a direct contradiction of the Bible. **Romans 5:11** says that "we have now received the atonement," and Christ's sacrifice was "finished," **John 19:30**, at the stake. We "are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," **Hebrews 10:10**. Christ is our mediator, **I Timothy 2:5**, by virtue of the fact that He had made full atonement for the sins of all the world when He died in place of us. Christ did not have to wait until 1844 to appear in the presence of God for us. The Bible teaches that when Jesus ascended to heaven He went directly into the most holy place "within the veil," **Hebrews 6:19, 9:24**. When Jesus died, the veil between the holy and the most holy place was rent in twain, **Matthew 27:51**. This signified that Christ's sacrifice made it possible for the believer's prayers to reach the very dwelling place of God, which is the *true* Most Holy Place. This happened immediately after Christ's ascension, not in 1844! His sacrifice

on Cavalry was sufficient for all time; there was no need of another “phase” of an atonement in 1844 (see also **Hebrews 9:25-28, 10:14, 9:12**). But SDA’s disagree with these truths. In the words of Uriah Smith, “Christ did not make the atonement when He shed His blood upon the cross,” *Looking Unto Jesus*, page 237.

Mrs. White said that no sins were blotted out until 1844: “At the close of the 2300 days, in 1844, began the work of investigation and the blotting out of sins,” (*Great Controversy*, page 552). Again, this statement is totally contrary to the Bible. **Acts 3:19** (RSV) says “Repent therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that [literal Greek says ‘in order that’] times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” David prayed that his sins would be blotted out, and that he would be washed from his iniquities, **Psalms 51:1-2**. Thus the Bible teaches a complete removal of sins at the time a sinner truly repents. SDA’s believe that all confessed sins until 1844 were “transferred to the heavenly sanctuary” thus “defiling the sanctuary” which began to be “cleansed” in 1844. How the heavenly Jerusalem, **Hebrews 12:22**, could be defiled yet be inhabited by a holy God and Christ, separate from sin and sinners, is something that has never been explained to my satisfaction by Seventh-day Adventists (see **Hebrews 7:22-28**).

Shut Door — Later Re-opened

Other Adventist groups admitted the gross error in assuming that October 22, 1844 was the Day of Atonement and the date of the return of Christ to the earth. But the White party never recanted, and instead changed their interpretation of what happened prophetically on that date. Based on a vision of Hiram Edson in 1844, the date was re-interpreted to state that on October 22, 1844, Christ cleansed the heavenly sanctuary and began His work of “investigative judgment.”

It is a well-documented fact that the Day of Atonement in 1844 fell on September 23, and Atonement can NEVER fall as late as October 22.

For about ten years after 1844, the White party taught that probation had closed for all the world except the Advent believers. This is called the “shut door doctrine.” In *A Word to*

the Little Flock (1847), page 14, Mrs. White clearly expressed the belief that non-Adventists could not be saved. James White in *Present Truth* (1849), page 22, said that the time of non-Adventists’ salvation was past. In later editions, these revealing portions were expunged. See also *Present Truth*, May, 1850, pages 75-79.

As a result of this teaching, public evangelism was not done, but Sabbath Adventists labored exclusively among those that had been in the Adventist movement during the years leading up to 1844. Ellen White’s “Camden Vision” stated that the wicked could not be benefitted by prayers of Adventists because they were lost. Later, these firm “shut door” teachings were conveniently forgotten, to pave the way for new converts. More damaging than believing in the shut door idea is denying that they ever taught it. Yet that is what a number of SDA apologists would have you believe.

Confusing Judgment

“In 1844 . . . our High Priest entered the holy of holies . . . to perform the work of investigative judgment. The only cases considered are those of the professed people of God,” *Great Controversy*, page 546. “There must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ are entitled to the benefits of His atonement,” (page 480).

The truth is, the fate of the righteous is settled at the time of their death. Righteous men and women in **Hebrews 11** are plainly said to be in the coming “better resurrection” **verse 35**. God knows who are His, **II Timothy 2:19**, He does not need a judgment beginning in 1844 to determine their fate. The ones whose fate is not yet determined are those who come up in the second resurrection, after the 1,000 years, **Revelation 20:5, 11-15**.

Says Mrs. White, “the judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon — none know how soon — it will pass to the cases of the living” (page 556). L.H. Christian, a notable SDA writer, in his book *Facing the Crisis* (1937) adds, “In this work of judgment which began in heaven in 1844 when the 2,300 years ended, the eternal fate of every soul will be decided. Beginning, no doubt, with Abel,

the first to die, one by one the names of all are called and the destiny of each is decided From that decision there will be no appeal. We know not what hour the Lord will come to our name and decide our case forever. It may be today, it may be tomorrow” (page 283).

If one’s case is decided when he is still living, then nothing you do either way from then on will matter? What confusion!

Half-Hearted Effort Not to Eat the Whole Hog!

In *Testimonies* (Volume I, pages 206-207), Mrs. White says that the Lord showed her that pork is “nourishing and strengthening food.” She was rebuking a brother in the church for teaching that swine’s flesh is forbidden food. She hadn’t yet had a “vision” on this subject, so he was being a troublemaker, since all truth must come through her. You should read this passage in the original.

In 1863, Mrs. White received “light” on the subject of pork (J.N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of Seventh-Day Adventists*, page 214). Yet in 1865 at an SDA conference, James White admitted that the Whites had just finished eating a 200-pound porker. In spite of all the evidence that the Whites originally taught that pork was nourishing food, Uriah Smith, an apologist for Mrs. White, wrote in 1868 that Mrs. White’s visions never taught that swine’s flesh was good and nourishing food (*The Visions of Mrs. E.G. White, a Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures*, page 95).

In *Spiritual Gifts*, Volume IV, page 124, Mrs. White claims a vision against pork: “God never designed the swine to be eaten under any circumstances.” Thus, “divine inspiration” was claimed for opposite teachings. She didn’t even follow her own visions for a time! Mrs. White maintained that “I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating, or writing a vision, as in having a vision.” A “vision” of hers published January 31, 1849, purported that those Sabbath-keepers who rejected the visions were speaking against the Holy Spirit. Are you bold enough to dare to check out what she said, or will you succumb out of fear, or the majority belief?

SDA’s Don’t Follow Their Own Prophetess

The subject of food must be one of great embarrassment to Seventh-day Adventists. It is readily apparent that not all SDA’s are vegetarians, yet the predominant teaching is against eating meat. Why this dichotomy? If on the one hand, SDA’s are supposed to believe that Ellen G. White’s visions are to be treated as the prophets of old, why do they not all listen to their prophetess? Why didn’t Ellen G. White follow her own prophecies?

She said in *Testimonies* (1872), Volume III, page 21, that her visions gave “positive testimony against tobacco, spirituous liquors, snuff, tea, coffee, flesh meats, butter, spices, rich cakes, mince pies, a large amount of salt, and all exciting substitutes used as articles of food.” Further, she stated that cheese should never enter the human stomach, and that “eggs should not be placed upon your table” (*Testimonies*, Volume II, pages 68, 400).

However, the Bible contradicts Mrs. White. Jesus ate fish, **Luke 24:41-43**. He prepared a “fish fry” for the disciples, **John 21:9-12**. As the God of the Old Testament, He ate a meal of bread, butter, milk and beef with Abraham, **Genesis 18:1-8**. The Messiah was prophesied to eat butter, **Isaiah 7:14-15**. God’s people eat eggs, **Job 6:6**, which are “good gifts” of His blessings to us, **Luke 11:11-13**. David ate cheese, **II Samuel 17:29**.

We agree that tobacco, and excessive amounts of coffee, tea, salt, and spices are harmful to the body, as well as excessive amounts of intoxicating beverages (there are many Scriptures on this topic). However, God created the alcoholic fermentation process. The Savior drank wine (not grape juice), **Matthew 11:18-19, John 2:1-11**. Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach’s sake, **I Timothy 5:23**. When SDA’s are confronted with the Bible facts on wine, they are totally dishonest and try to say that the Greek word for wine, *oinos*, means “grape juice.” Try getting drunk on grape juice (**Ephesians 5:18**, which uses this same Greek word *oinos*)!

Let us be honest with God’s Holy Word! Ellen G. White’s writings are held to be as inspired as Isaiah and all the prophets of old. Yet she contradicts the Bible and herself.

Seventh-day Adventists today are not honest. Mrs. White’s published vision says that we are positively not to eat flesh meats. Yet the SDA church does not follow this

teaching. A recent *Adventist Review* magazine (1978 "Friendship Issue") states that she merely gave "advice to abstain from flesh foods" and "not all members have adopted a non flesh diet" (page 12). If many members of the church founded by Mrs. White do not even believe what she said, when she claimed infallibility, why should I believe Ellen G. White at all? I'd rather believe **I Timothy 4:1-4**, "Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, . . . commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving . . ."

The god of Medicine

Seventh-day Adventists claim to be very health conscious. They speak of the body as the "temple of the Holy Spirit." They are supposedly against ingesting anything harmful to the body. Like Adventists, we believe in prayer and anointing the sick. But there is a vast difference between us and Adventists on the subject of health.

Adventists operate a series of hospitals that dispense harmful drugs, are said to perform abortions, perform needless or destroying operations, and in short, are little different than the rest of modern "health science" which is founded on pagan Egyptian and Greek medicine.

The true way of the Creator Yahweh is the way of obedience to His laws of cleanliness in diet and total living, and of faith in Him to heal you when sick. We should seek and use natural substances such as herbs, which the Creator has given for our health ("herb for the service of man," **Psalms 104:14-15**). Read our book, ***Biblical Health and Healing***.

On the other hand is the way of "doing your own thing," and then going to medical "science" to operate on you, or to pump harmful drugs into your body, in order to repair the damage.

Those who know how drugs and vaccines are made and of what substances they are composed, understand why there is great hypocrisy in avoiding unclean substances such as pork, while at the same time freely taking drugs and vaccines. Some vaccines are made from putrefied pus of animals such as horses, calves, and monkeys. See the book,

Vaccination Condemned by Eleanor McBean, pages 284-325. Since I believe that the Eternal's laws forbid eating unclean foods, I can't reason around pumping putrefied unclean animal substances into my bloodstream, in the name of "health."

Seventh-day Adventists do not rate highly as truly being health conscious. But then neither do most other Sabbath-keepers either. My God is a lot more powerful than the "modern" god of medicine. Yahweh is my healer, **Exodus 15:26**. How about you?

Only Part of Key Verse Quoted

In the *Great Controversy*, Mrs. White quotes only part of **Isaiah 24:6** to "prove" that at Christ's coming, all the wicked will be destroyed on the earth, leaving the earth desolate during the millennium, while the saints supposedly will be taken to Heaven (page 657). Yet the rest of the verse states that there will be few men left. Scripture is plain that the millennial kingdom will be on the earth, not up in Heaven, **Zechariah 14; Acts 1:11-12; Revelation 5:10, 2:26-27, 20:6**, etc. The earth will, under the saints' rule under Christ, be restored to its Edenic glory, **Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:1-9**. God created the earth to be the home of mankind, not to be destroyed, **Isaiah 45:18**.

Military Service

Seventh-day Adventists are not opposed to military service. They will, if conscripted, serve as medics.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, some leading Sabbath Adventists, such as H.E. Carver of Iowa, were opposed to bearing arms and believed that the church should adopt the same position publicly. James White wrote in the *Review* that to engage in war would be a violation of two of God's commandments, but in case of being drafted, the government would be responsible for an individual's violation of God's commandments. In effect, he said that it was all right in these cases to break God's law!

However, Iowa Church of God brethren were so adamantly against warfare that they petitioned and were granted a special state exemption as non-combatants, which the White group branded as "fanaticism."

The Church of God has always been

fundamentally opposed to bearing arms or to come under military authority. They do not waffle on this issue.

As detailed in our article, “And Follow Their Faith!” Adventists changed their general opposition to participation in carnal warfare, and expelled German Adventists who refused to accept this doctrinal change. See the book, published by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, “And Follow Their Faith!” available from Giving & Sharing.

Marriage Sanctity Not Stressed

Besides prohibition of foods that God intended for man to eat, Ellen G. White discouraged marriage: “In this age of the world,” she stated, “as the scenes of earth’s history are soon to close, and we are about to enter upon the time of trouble such as never was, the fewer marriages contracted, the better for all, both men and women” (*Testimonies*, 1885, Volume V, page 366).

Marriage is not one of the strongest doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists. A Seventh Day Baptist leader told me he has seen a scholarly research paper proving that Seventh-day Adventists have one of the highest divorce rates of any Protestant denomination. Since divorce, and especially divorce and remarriage (contrary to the Bible) is an important religious issue today, SDA’s are culpable in not having the right doctrine and not speaking out on this vital issue.

Good Friday — Easter Sunday Belief

Mrs. White’s visions supposedly supported the idea that Christ was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday. Jesus said the only sign He would give that He was the Messiah, was that He would be three days AND three nights in the heart of the earth, **Matthew 12:40**. The way people argue around the plain statements of Jesus to cling to the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition, never ceases to amaze me. Christ was not resurrected on Sunday morning, but on Saturday as the Sabbath was ending.

Some SDA’s believe in the Saturday resurrection, although the official church position supports Sunday. Some writers have attempted to show that Ellen G. White suggested a Saturday resurrection in her book,

Desire of the Ages.

One of the key doctrines of the Church of God (Seventh Day) since the 1860s has been their belief of the Wednesday crucifixion and Saturday resurrection. This belief gives a death blow to Sunday-keeping, and it is strange that SDA’s keep the Sabbath, yet also believe in the Sunday resurrection doctrine.

Adventists Hold Pagan, Unscriptural Trinity Belief

Adventists believe in the Trinity, that God is three persons in one. Early English and American Sabbatarians and the Church of God have rejected Trinitarianism. Joseph Davis, Sr., a member of the London Mill Yard Church, wrote in 1670 that he believed in one God the Father, one Lord Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is the power of God, not part of a “Trinity.” Historically, Trinitarianism is not a doctrine commonly associated with Sabbath-keepers. Ellen G. White carried over many of her Methodist beliefs into the Adventist church.

There are many Bible proofs against the Trinity. For instance, if the Holy Spirit is a distinct person, then the Holy Spirit, not God the Father, is the sire of Jesus, **Matthew 1:18**. This is ridiculous! The word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, so the burden of proof is upon Trinitarians to prove the existence of three beings. Adventists believe that the Holy Spirit, or the Comforter, is the personal representative of Christ on the earth. The Bible says that we must have the spirit of Christ in us, **Romans 8:11**, that Christ in us is our hope of glory, **Colossians 1:27**. Both God the Father and Christ are composed of Holy Spirit essence, which is their power and mind, **Philippians 2:5; II Timothy 1:7**. They are both Holy Spirit.

Early Adventists, such as pioneer Joseph Bates, were not Trinitarians. Some conservative Adventists today, such as Richard Carlson, believe that the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference no longer represents God’s faithful people, primarily because of its ecumenical and authoritarian stance, and the acceptance and teaching of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. The Trinity is the fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church, upon which all her other doctrines are based.

Easter and Quarterly Communion

Because Mrs. White was originally a Methodist, we can understand why she carried Protestant ideas such as the Trinity over into her new religion. This is, no doubt, the reason why she continued the practice of observing communion quarterly. The Church of God, from its inception on the Day of Pentecost in the First Century, has observed the Christian Passover annually, as the replacement of the Jewish Passover.

Seventh-day Adventist scholar Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi verifies that the early true Christians kept the annual Passover. In his famous book, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (pages 81, 161-164, 198-207) he cites Epiphanius who said that until 135 A.D., Christians everywhere observed the Passover on the Jewish date (not with a lamb, but with bread and wine as Jesus instituted). He also gives much other historical material which nails down the fact that “the inclination to break away from Judaism” led Rome to abandon the Quartodeciman Passover (annual Passover on the 14th day of the first Hebrew month of Nisan) as well as leave the seventh-day Sabbath and instead keep Easter and Sunday. Sunday-keeping is the weekly extension of an annual Easter. And Easter is based on the false idea that Christ was resurrected on a Sunday morning.

How SDA’s can justify keeping communion quarterly, and Easter which borrows relics from paganism, after reading the works of one of their greatest scholars, Dr. Bacchiocchi, is a source of amazement to me!

Against God’s Holy Days

Seventh-day Adventists present quite typical Protestant anti-Holy Day arguments. They generally do not know too much about the Holy Days. And quite surprisingly, in their official publication against the Radio (later Worldwide) Church of God, they only devote a few pages toward the end of the book to a refutation of the Holy Days. Since the antitypical fulfillment of each of the Holy Days has already occurred, they reason, there is little purpose in observing the Holy Days.

One does not, and cannot, understand something he hasn’t experienced. You cannot understand the Holy Days until you keep them.

Those who truly keep the Holy Days know — from the Scriptures — that every one of the Holy Days (even Passover) points also to a *future* event as yet unfulfilled in God’s plan.

In 1995, leading Adventist Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, demonstrated in his book, *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*, that all of the Biblical Holy Days point to past, present, and future events. This “discovery” led Bacchiocchi to accept the Holy Days. He found that many SDA colleagues had already been privately keeping the Holy Days as well. So, perhaps on this issue, some SDA’s are making spiritual progress! It is also encouraging to note that Bacchiocchi attacks the observance of pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

They Are Protestants! They Are Catholics!

A revealing SDA belief is their open admission that they are Protestants. Ellen G. White writes glowingly of Reformers such as Martin Luther. This may be merely following the common view that one is either a Catholic or a Protestant.

This concept is contrary, however, to the Biblical view that the true apostolic Church of God largely fell away, and controlling elements initiated the great false Catholic church, while scattered true believers fled into obscurity, leaving only traces of their existence in history’s record.

The Catholic Church is the great whore, and has many harlot Protestant daughters, **Revelation 17:5**. I am a member of the Church that has no connection with this system! SDA’s are in reality little different than Protestants. Their doctrines are permeated with Catholic and non-Biblical corruption, such as Trinity, Good Friday, Easter, Christmas, etc. A tree is known by its fruit. They are a Protestant church that happens to keep the Sabbath. But, let us have hope that many SDA’s can return to the faith once delivered. We should never write them off. Let us help them as we can.

Conservative SDA’s are appalled that their church hierarchy has joined the World Council of Churches, and compares its government to that of the Catholic Church. As reported in *The End Times* newsletter, Walter Scragg, President of the SDA South Pacific Division, admitted that “the structure of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church is essentially hierarchical . . . The pyramid of church organization. . . ” (*Record*, June 23, 1990, pp. 4-5). Douglas Devnich, President of the SDA Canadian Union, stated, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church follows a model of organizational order in the church which is modified from the orders of Roman Catholicism, but it retains the same notions of clerical order which separates the members of the church into two classes — clergy and laity” (*Messenger*, December, 1993, p. 2). In the March 5, 1981, issue of *Adventist Review*, SDA General Conference President Neal C. Wilson stated, “There is another universal and truly catholic organization, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

The SDA Pacific Press Publishing Association, defending itself against a lawsuit brought by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, stated, “Although it is true that there was a period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the denomination took a distinctly anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint, and the term ‘hierarchy’ was used in the pejorative sense to refer to the papal form of church governance, that attitude on the church’s part was nothing more than a manifestation of widespread anti-popey among conservative Protestant denominations in the early part of this century and the latter part of the last, and which has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is considered” (civil case #74-2025 CBR 1975, Reply Brief for Defendants, p. 4). On September 14, 1996, a Catholic priest, Benedict O’Cinnsealeigh, gave a Sabbath sermon to the SDA Church of Kettering, Ohio, explaining forty similarities between the Roman Catholic Church and Seven-day Adventists. Judge William T. Hart, in handing down a decision against Derrick Proctor and in favor of the SDA Church, stated, “Church documents that prescribe the church’s structure and governance confirm that all parts of the church are parts of a single entity. Next to the Roman Catholic Church, the Adventist church is the most centralized of all the major Christian denominations in this country.” More information is given in *The End Times*, published by Richard Carlson, PO Box 1102, Lady Lake, FL 32158-1102.

Purpose and Place of Church Organization

Seventh-day Adventists say they are the true church, the “remnant people of God.” They say there may be people saved who were never in their organization, but all who hear their message and have the opportunity to join them, must do so to be saved. They hold that they are the only organization. The powers exercised by SDA leaders are similar to those of the Catholic hierarchy. There is a strict test of fellowship, and those not complying are excommunicated. Each candidate for baptism must agree to a list of statements of SDA beliefs before being baptized. Tithes are sent to regional or general headquarters. Pastors are appointed to churches and paid by the Conference, which holds legal title to the local church property.

The Church of God is not any exclusive church organization; membership in an “organization” is not, and never has been, a pre-requisite for salvation. Search the New Testament diligently, and you will never see all tithes going to a central church headquarters, you will never see all ministers appointed from headquarters. There is no Bible example of a monolithic church hierarchical organization. Instead, local elders assisted individual members to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, **Philippians 2:12**. Rather than proudly claiming to be the “only ones” that God has called, true believers remember Elijah’s lack of awareness of other believers, **Romans 11:1-5**, and realize that God knows those who are His, **II Timothy 2:19**.

Church Name

Ellen G. White had a vision that told her that the Sabbath Adventists should be called “Seventh-day Adventists,” and that to use the term “Church of God” would be to excite suspicion, conceal absurd errors, and be a mark of fanaticism. However, as usual, she contradicted her own visions and used the name Church of God in several instances during the early years.

The Eternal’s true people are kept in His own name, **John 17:11**. To use the Scriptural name for the body of His people is not fanaticism: **Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 1:2, 10:32, 11:16, 22, 15:9; II Corinthians 1:1; I Thessalonians 2:14; II Thessalonians 1:4; I Timothy 3:5, 15; and Galatians 1:13**.

Amalgamation of Man and Beast

Mrs. White said in *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume I, page 78, "Every species of animals which God created was preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood. Since the flood, there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men." This appeared in the 1864 and 1870 editions of this book, but was quietly omitted in later editions.

Uriah Smith supported this: "there was amalgamation; and the effect is still visible in certain races of men . . . wild Bushmen of Africa, some tribes of the Hottentots, and perhaps the Digger Indians of our own country, etc." (*The Visions*, by Uriah Smith, leading SDA writer, page 103).

The beast and man mixing theory is something that no modern SDA would support. This idea is more absurd than evolution. SDA's are not honest when they cover up for the errors of their "prophetess."

A Great Plagiarist

Ellen G. White copied profusely from other books, never giving credit yet claiming that every word she wrote was a direct revelation from God. Her *Sketches from the Life of Paul* was taken so largely from Conybeare & Howson's *Life and Epistles of Paul*, that SDA's were compelled to take it off the market when it was in great demand.

Her best known book, *Great Controversy*, was largely copied from D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation* and Wylie's *History of Protestantism*. Whole paragraphs were used with little or no change yet with no quotation marks or credit. Finally, the 1911 edition of *Controversy* introduced quotation marks and has over 400 credits not shown in older editions. More information on this aspect of Adventism is given in the articles by Sydney Cleveland in this series.

Wise Advice on Debt — Not Followed

If only Mrs. White and SDA's would follow her teachings! She warned her followers to "Shun debt as they should shun

the leprosy" (*Testimonies*, Volume II, page 217). Yet she was nearly \$90,000 in debt when she died in the early 1900s.

Reform Dress — Quietly Forgotten

About 1863 or earlier, Mrs. White wrote in *Testimonies*, Volume I, page 458, "Christians should not take pains to make themselves a 'gazing stock' by dressing differently from the world."

Later she changed her teaching and said, "God would now have His people adopt the reform dress, not only to distinguish them from the world as his 'peculiar people,' but because a reform dress is essential to physical and mental health" (*Testimonies*, Volume I, page 525). On page 424 she said the women's dresses should be an inch or two above the floor, while on page 521 she advised nine inches from the floor.

The "reform dress" was loose pants with a sack over it. She said that "It is just what we need to distinguish and separate God's commandment-keeping people from the world" (*Testimonies*, Volume III, page 171). Mrs. White even sold patterns for the SDA women to make the dress.

Great importance was attached to the reform dress, so much that a daughter of an Adventist pioneer preacher, in coming to the altar in a prayer meeting, was loudly asked by the minister, "Will you wear the reform dress?"

Most SDA women grudgingly went along. Mrs. White went to California about 1872, and before returning, she quietly rejected the dress. Other Adventist women quickly followed suit.

Prior to 1900s, some Battle Creek Adventist women tried to restore the reform dress, but were sharply rebuked by Mrs. White who said, "The Lord does not require any test of human invention . . . No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress" (*Review & Herald*, September 11, 1900). First the reform dress was a vision from God; but now it was reduced to merely a human invention.

The SDA apologist, F.D. Nichol, devotes nearly 25 pages of his book, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*, to try to show that she didn't receive instruction in a vision about skirts 9 inches above the floor. The above quotes, plus a picture of Mrs. White in such a dress about this length, proves Nichol wrong.

As I read articles pro and con about Ellen G. White, I am greatly amazed how Seventh-day Adventists can respect their “prophets.” Maybe it is because few today have seen the old editions which were later “edited” to remove damaging comments. Having personally examined many of these dusty texts, I cannot help but question the moral integrity of such men. The Almighty is their judge.

Religious Doubletalk

“The writings of Mrs. E. G. White were never designed to be an addition to the canon of Scripture. They are, nevertheless, the messages of God to the remnant church, and should be received as such, the same as were the messages of the prophets of old” (*Review & Herald*, October 4, 1928).

If we carefully examine this statement, we will clearly see the religious doubletalk. Scripture cannot be broken, **John 10:35**. It has no error. God doesn’t inspire any error. All writings of uninspired man are prone to error and falsehood, no matter what their intentions may be. So if Ellen G. White’s writings are not scripture, she is in one statement “taken off the hook” for any error she may have. On the other hand, it is claimed that her writings are the messages of God and should be treated equally with the messages given to Samuel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But these prophets’ messages are in the Bible. What is the difference? It’s the same effect. Just because we don’t trust anyone today to “canonize” Scripture doesn’t mean that men today don’t recognize various writings as inspired. Mormons have their Book of Mormon, SDA’s have Ellen G. White’s writings, Christian Scientists have Mary Baker Eddy, all the while claiming to believe in the Holy Bible, along with some other inspired writings. Somehow the meaning of **Revelation 22:18-19** seems to escape these people. May the Eternal help us not engage in such hypocritical double talk, attempting to reason around following another human being! God’s Word cannot be broken. Man’s words can. Let us recognize the difference.

Source of Ellen G. White’s Visions

Seventh-day Adventists claim the source of Mrs. White’s visions was divine. During

numerous visions, doctors attested to the fact that she stopped breathing and was unconscious, but her heart beat regularly. In an 1858 vision, she was confined to bed and raised the upper part of her body at a 30 degree angle up from the bed unsupported by hands and arms for 30 minutes. A leading Adventist minister, J.N. Loughborough, who personally witnessed this event, states, “Here again was proof that some power over which she had no control was connected with the vision” (Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-Day Adventists*, pages 91-95, 218-219).

The Bible, however, shows that God’s true prophets are never possessed with such a spirit. “The spirits of the prophets are subject to the control of the prophets” (**I Corinthians 14:32**, NIV). **Verse 14 of Romans 8** shows that God’s Spirit leads and does not take over and control us apart from our own will.

From her childhood, when she was struck in the head by a rock and was in a coma for days, until later in life, Mrs. White suffered nervous and physical disorders. Later, when her health improved (possibly from keeping the laws of health, such as abstaining from pork), the visions were less frequent and not as intense.

Dr. W. J. Fairfield, brought up as an SDA, and for years a physician in their Sanitarium at Battle Creek, wrote a letter on December 28, 1887, stating: “You are undoubtedly right in ascribing Mrs. E. G. White’s so-called visions to disease. It has been my opportunity to observe her case a good deal, covering quite a period of years, which, with a full knowledge of her history from the beginning gave me no chance to doubt her ‘divine’ attacks to be simply hysterical trances. Age itself has almost cured her.”

Dr. William Long, an SDA and chief physician at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, wrote on July 12, 1869 that he had made up his mind some time previously “that Mrs. White’s visions were the result of a diseased organization or condition of the brain or nervous system.”

Ellen G. White admitted at a conference at Pilot Grove, Iowa in 1865, that when she visited Dr. Jackson’s Health Institute, the doctor, upon a medical examination, pronounced her a subject of hysteria.

How Mrs. White’s visions enabled her

husband, James White, and herself to gain control of the Sabbath Adventist movement, and how the visions supported prevalent ideas, and changed when the weight of opinion changed, how the visions conveniently came to correct those who disbelieved in Mrs. White's divine revelation, is shown time and again in our books, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God, Volume I*, and *Six Papers on the History of the Church of God*, article, "Sabbath Adventists."

Since the days of legal organization of the Sabbath Adventists, the visions of Ellen G. White have been made a test. In 1862, Uriah Smith, a leading SDA writer, in *Review & Herald*, said, "those who reject the gifts do not have true union with the body. From the very nature of the case, they cannot have it." Thus, belief in Ellen G. White's visions is as important as deciding with whom to fellowship, as well as the Sabbath, baptism, and the coming of Christ!

Do They Really Believe in the Sabbath?

There is a serious question whether or not Seventh-day Adventists truly are Sabbath-keepers. They believe that enforced Sunday observance is the "mark of the Beast." Yet when government bodies force them to work on the Sabbath, they give in and do so.

An example is the SDA church in the former Soviet Union. The "Official" SDA church in the USSR cooperated with military service requirements of the government, obtained prior government approval of sermons, sent their children to school on the Sabbath, and cooperated with government-enforced programs in the autumn, when young people were required to harvest crops on the Sabbath.

This is not an historical oddity, because in Germany during World War I, SDA's approved of participation of their young men in the military, including the bearing of arms. The desires of a totalitarian government, they felt, superseded **Acts 5:29**. In the Nazi era, Adventist church leaders accommodated the Nazi state, joined the Nazi war machine, fought on the Sabbath, and gave Nazi salute. The April 20, 1940, *Morning Watch* (Adventist publication) praised Adolph Hitler for his humility, self-sacrifice and "warm heart." Adventists even disfellowshipped members of

Jewish origin, and testified against Adventists who they expelled for being conscientious objectors. See the book, *And Follow Their Faith!* Published by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, and available from Giving & Sharing.

To their credit, a small group of Adventists in the Soviet Union, called True and Free Seventh-Day Adventists, refused to sell out to Babylon. They opposed the "official" sanctioned church, but did not seem to have much support from American Adventists.

A Strange Church?

The Seventh-day Adventist stance on homosexuality seems to be ambivalent at best.

There are at least two separate organizations of SDA homosexuals: the Orion Fellowship Alliance (formed 1982) and the Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship International (formed 1977).

Both seek to minister to SDA gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people. The SDA Kinship has a liaison with the SDA General Conference. Although it is not officially sanctioned (yet) by the Church, SDA Kinship speakers have been invited to speak at SDA colleges. Some Adventist pastors refer counselees to SDA Kinship, and no longer consider being gay and Christian a contradiction of terms. Six official representatives of the SDA church attended a gay Adventist meeting and as a result of their joint discussions, presented nine proposals to the Church administration, seven of which were passed, one of which was to call for an in-depth reevaluation of the Church's position on homosexuality.

To his consternation, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi reports that in California, there are several SDA Churches that openly promote acceptance of the gay and lesbian lifestyle.

Church Built on Sand

Our Savior doesn't change, **Hebrews 13:8**. If He truly lives in us, we won't change either. When you see a church liberalize and water down doctrinal beliefs, then you know the Spirit is not leading them.

Several years ago, an 86-year-old Sabbath-keeper visited our home. He was closely associated with Adventists for 50 years. He said that Adventists formerly avoided anything to do with worldly holidays which stem from

paganism, such as Christmas and Easter. Other older Sabbath-keepers tell me that old time Adventists were staunchly against divorce and remarriage. SDA's have bent with the pressure of society and thrown away truths they once had.

May it always be said of us, that we are true and consistent with our beliefs and convictions, continually growing in God's truth, and holding fast to His revealed ways of life!

Adventists are part of the shifting sands of modern Protestantism. They are not built on the rock of the Savior of mankind.

An Honest Conclusion

In discussing Ellen G. White with a couple of Adventist friends, they remarked how they look to the Bible only, and do not equate her writings with the Bible. However, they say that studying her writings with the Bible, really helps one understand. Like the founding principles of the SDA church, Adventists today coexist with a contradiction of terms. On the one hand, SDA writings and Mrs. White herself, equate everything she wrote to God's message for His end time people. Yet on the other hand, we find "loyal" SDA's who do not abstain from meat, who question many of her "infallible" precepts.

As a former member of the Worldwide Church of God founded by Herbert W. Armstrong, I am sometimes subjected to ridicule because of the claims he has made as being "God's Apostle." Yet Herbert Armstrong never made quite the degree of claims to infallibility that Ellen G. White did. He changed doctrinal teachings openly time and again as a result of study. I never heard Herbert Armstrong quoted equally with the Bible in religious services. He was rarely quoted. Doctrines were generally believed and practiced by the entire membership.

I do find some similarities, however. Early literature in both groups is suppressed and sometimes altered. There is great central authority and uniformity of belief is stressed. Most of the membership in the Seventh-day Adventist and Worldwide Church of God are oblivious to the truth of what is really going on, and few check out the early history of their church. Both groups have recently undergone serious defections. Desmond Ford and many

Australian SDA's have differed sharply with Adventist headquarters over the Investigative Judgment, and may be in the process of forming a new denomination. (There have been many splits from the SDA church through the years.)

SDA's are acting as if their founder was not completely inspired in everything, but refuse to admit openly that their founder had and taught many errors and had questionable conduct. In the case of the Worldwide Church of God, for many years, Herbert Armstrong taught "divine inspiration" for a Monday Pentecost and was against divorce and remarriage. Then in later years he claimed "divine" inspiration for a Sunday Pentecost and freedom to divorce and remarry for almost any reason. Ellen G. White did the same sort of thing. This breach cannot be healed. At one time (or both) they had to be uninspired. I have to be honest and flee such confusion.

We are Sabbath-keepers, but not Seventh-day Adventists. Some day, the Eternal will help us all to see eye to eye.

Sunday-keepers may think that we are little different than Seventh-Day Adventists. But my honest conclusion is that there is a vast difference. Being honest with the Bible and with Ellen G. White's writings is the basic reason why I am not a Seventh-day Adventist.

— written by Richard C. Nickels Ω

This article was originally published as Study No. 64.

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Are SDAs Ready to Rewrite Ellen G. White?

By Sydney Cleveland

Part 1

The Seventh-day Adventist Church may be preparing the faithful for an extensive rewriting of Ellen White's Testimonies. In fact, according to Paul A. Gordon, current Secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, the process of changing, abridging, and/or simplifying her writings was begun during her lifetime. Long considered to be a Divinely inspired prophet, Seventh-day Adventists have carefully treasured each word Ellen White wrote. Reading her materials is a significant undertaking considering that she wrote some 100,000 pages of handwritten manuscripts containing an estimated 15-20 million words. While the church claims it does *not* subscribe to the verbal inspiration of either the Bible or Ellen White, it sees no inconsistency in carefully preserving Ellen White's verbage. The Ellen G. White Estate, a subsidiary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has historically cared for and published her writings. As a safety factor, microfilm duplicates of her manuscripts have been established in various locations around the world.

Early Controversy Over Sources

Almost from the moment Ellen White's visions were published, her claims to Divine inspiration were challenged. As early as 1847, her husband James White published a tract titled *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* and included the following excerpts from a letter he received: "I cannot endorse sister Ellen's visions as being of Divine inspiration, as you and she think them to be; yet I do not suspect the least shade of dishonesty in either of you in this matter I think that what she and you regard as visions from the Lord, are only religious reveries, in which her imagination runs without control upon themes in which she is most deeply interested. While so absorbed in these reveries, she is lost to everything around her In either case, the *sentiments*, in the main, are obtained from previous teaching, or study." [James White, *A Word to the Little Flock,* (1847), p. 22. This facsimile reproduction of the original was published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association and is available through local Adventist Book Centers.]

Claiming Divine Inspiration

Seizing the opportunity to affirm the Divine inspiration of his wife's visions, James White wrote: "However true this extract may be in relation to reveries, it is *not* true in regard to the visions: for the author (Ellen White) *does not* 'obtain the sentiments' of her visions 'from previous teaching or study.'" [*Ibid.*, p. 22.]

James' statement was consistent with the position taken by Ellen White: the sources of her writings were Divinely inspired visions and not the result of copying or plagiarizing other authors. In 1880 he wrote: "Mrs. White has written and spoken a hundred things, as truthful as they are beautiful and harmonious, which cannot be found in the writings of others, they are new to the most intelligent readers and hearers. And if they are not to be found in print, and are not brought out in sermons from the pulpit, where did Mrs. White find them? From what source has she received the new and rich thoughts which are to be found in her writings and oral addresses? She could not have learned them from books, from the fact that they do not contain such thought." [James White, *Life Sketches*, (1880 edition), pp. 328, 329, published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.]

The "Remnant Church" and the "Spirit of Prophecy"

Being one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White was early revered by the faithful as "the Imitation of Christ," and later as "the Lord's Messenger." As both organization and doctrinal beliefs were developed the church found its mission and identity in the "Remnant Church" concept. By linking **Revelation 12:17** to **Revelation 19:10**, Adventists claimed their identity as "the Remnant Church" on the basis that they alone kept the Sabbath and had a living prophet. The faithful gave credence to this concept by referring to Ellen White and her writings as "The Spirit of Prophecy." This link between Ellen White and the Remnant Church

is the cornerstone of Seventh-day Adventism — so much so that the following statement appeared in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 14, 1883: “Our position on the Testimonies is like the keystone to the arch. Take that out, and there is no logical stopping place till all the special truths of this message are gone. . . . Nothing is *surer* than this, that this message and the visions belong together and stand or fall together.”

Testimonies from the “Spirit of Prophecy”

As “the Spirit of Prophecy,” Ellen White herself repeatedly claimed that not only were her visions Divinely inspired, but that she also required Divine inspiration in writing out the messages she had received: “I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that He is pleased to have me relate or write them.” [Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, (1860), vol. 2, p. 293.]

Ellen White’s claim to Divine inspiration not only included the written version of her visions, but also the writing of all her books and letters (commonly referred to as “Testimonies”). The following quotations are indicative of her claims: “The Lord has seen fit to give me a view of the needs and errors of His people. Painful though it has been to me, I have faithfully set before the offenders their faults and the means of remedying them, according to the dictates of the Spirit of God.” [Ellen White, *Testimonies*, (1876) vol. 4, p.14.]

“In my books, the truth is stated, barricaded by a ‘thus saith the Lord.’ The Holy Spirit traced these truths upon my heart and mind.” [Ellen White, Letter 90, 1906, quoted in *Ellen G. White*, vol. 4, p. 393, by Arthur L. White.]

“I arose at three o’clock in the morning to write to you. God was speaking through clay. You might say that this . . . 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.” [Ellen White, *Testimonies*, (1882), vol. 5, p. 67]

“I am only an instrument in the Lord’s hands to do the work He has set for me to do. The instructions that I have given by pen or voice have been an expression of the light God has given me. I have tried to place before you the principles that the spirit of God has for years been impressing upon my mind and writing on my heart.” [Ibid., p. 691.]

“I have written many books, and they have been given a wide circulation. Of myself I could not have brought out the truth in these books, but the Lord has given me the help of His Holy Spirit. These books, giving the instruction that the Lord has given me during the past sixty years, contain light from heaven, and will bear the test of investigation.” [Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, (1906), vol. 1, p. 35.]

The evidence is clear that Ellen White openly taught that she was Divinely inspired and that her visions were the source of the information she communicated through her letters, books, articles, and verbal Testimonies. But during her lifetime, and over the succeeding years, information has repeatedly surfaced indicating Ellen White was not honest about her sources. Long before her death in 1915, Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders were becoming more and more aware that Ellen White had voraciously copied the works of others.

Charges of Plagiarism

In the 1880s Ellen White published her book *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 3. The book was later republished under the name *Sketches From the Life of Paul*. Curiously, the book was dropped from print for nearly 100 years before it was republished in facsimile form by *the Review and Herald* in 1974. Thumbing through a few pages inside the front cover you will see a section titled “Preface to Facsimile Edition.” There you will discover this unusual explanation: “The much-loved Ellen G. White book, *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, was issued by the Seventh-day Adventist church’s two publishing houses, the Review and Herald, and Pacific Press, early in the summer of 1883. . . . The book ran through two printings at each house and was being considered as a book to be sold by literature evangelists, but it dropped out of print. The reason for its demise is easy to understand in view of the historical context.” [Note by the Board of Trustees of the Ellen

G. White Estate placed in the facsimile edition of *Sketches From the Life of Paul*. “Preface to Facsimile Edition.”]

What was the “historical context” which caused Ellen White’s book to “drop out of print?” The answer is given by Arthur G. Daniells, then General Conference President and long-time associate of Ellen White. Speaking to some fifty top leaders, theologians, teachers, and writers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on August 1, 1919, Daniells said: “Now you know something about that little book, (*Sketches From the Life of Paul*). You know the difficulty we got into about that. We could never claim inspiration in the whole thought and make up of the book, because it has been thrown aside because it was badly put together. Credits were not given to the proper authorities, and some of that crept into *The Great Controversy*. . . . I suppose you all know about it and knew what claims were put up against her, charges made of plagiarism, even by the authors of the book, Conybeare and Howson, and were liable to make the denomination trouble because there was so much of their book put into (*Sketches From the Life of Paul*) without any credit or quotation marks I found it out, and I read it with Brother Palmer when he found it, and we got Conybeare and Howson, and we got Wylie’s *History of the Reformation*, and we read word for word, page after page, and no quotations, no credit, and really I did not know the difference until I began to compare them. I supposed it was Sister White’s own work!” [Taken from the official transcription of the August 1, 1919 Bible Conference minutes, published in *Spectrum*, vol. 10, number 1, pp. 51, 52.]

Was There a Lawsuit Charging Plagiarism?

According to Daniell’s explanation it is evident Ellen White had copied so much from Conybeare and Howson’s *Life and Epistles of Saint Paul* (written 30 years prior to Ellen White’s *Sketches From the Life of Paul*), that its authors threatened to make trouble for the denomination! Since their book had not been copyrighted they probably would not have won a lawsuit, but they could have publicly exposed Ellen White’s fallacious claim to Divine inspiration. Therefore it was in the Church’s interest to immediately drop Ellen White’s plagiarized book from publication.

Wrestling Over Inspiration

During this same Bible Conference, the Church’s leadership wrestled with questions concerning Ellen White’s claims to Divine inspiration and mounting evidence to the contrary. Eleven times they were asked for a definitive answer, and eleven times they avoided an official decision. The flavor of their discussion and concerns is brought out in the following quotations:

“F.M. Wilcox (Editor of the *Review and Herald*): ‘I think we have to deal with a very delicate question, and I would hate terribly to see an influence sweep over the field and into any of our schools that the Testimonies were discounted. There is great danger of a reaction, and I do feel concerned. I have heard questions raised here that have left the impression on my mind that if the same questions are raised in our classes when we get back to our schools, we are going to have serious difficulty. I believe there are a great many questions that we should hold back and not discuss I think if we destroy faith in them (Ellen White’s Testimonies), we are going to destroy faith in the very foundation of our work. . . . And unless these questions can be dealt with most diplomatically, I think we are going to have serious trouble.’ . . .

“C.L. Benson: “If there are such uncertainties with reference to our historical position, and if the Testimonies are not to be relied on . . . and if the same is true with reference to our theological interpretation of texts, then how can we consistently place implicit confidence in the direction that is given (by Ellen White) with reference to our educational problems, and our medical school, and even our denominational organization?” . . .

“J.N. Anderson (Bible teacher at Washington Foreign Mission Seminary): ‘Can we hold those things back and be true to ourselves? And furthermore, are we safe in doing it? Is it well to let our people in general go on holding to the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies? When we do that, aren’t we preparing for a crisis that will be very serious some day?’ . . .

“C.L Taylor (Head of the Bible Department at Canadian Junior College): ‘I think we have made a great big mountain of difficulty to go out and fight against. . . . If we must lay aside what Sister White has said interpreting history . . . as unreliable, and also lay aside as unreliable (her) expositions of Scripture, the only natural conclusion for me, and probably a great many others,

would be that the same authorship is unreliable regarding organization, regarding pantheism, and every other subject that she ever treated on — that she may have told the truth, but we had better get all the historical data we can to see whether she told the truth or not.’ . . .

“M.E. Kern (President of Foreign Mission Seminary): ‘The question is . . . how can we feel, and believe and know that there is an inconsistency there, — something that is not right, and yet believe that the Spirit of Prophecy (Ellen White) is inspired? . . . The question is how to present these matters to the people.’”[*Ibid.*, pp. 45-48.]

Those were questions that the highest Seventh-day Adventist leadership wrestled with back in 1919: how do we admit Ellen White was not verbally inspired; how do we admit her writings are untrustworthy in every area — yet still keep people’s faith in the Church, its organization, and its doctrines? On the other hand, how do we as leaders who know these things about Ellen White maintain our own integrity by continuing to teach myths? And if we do teach the myths about Ellen White, aren’t we just setting up the church for a future crisis when the truth does come out? What was their verdict? In Part 2 we will examine the historic decision of Seventh-day Adventist leadership, the results, and current trends as the Church continues to refine its views of Ellen G. White.

Part 2

As presented in Part 1, Ellen White openly and repeatedly claimed to be Divinely inspired. However, four years after her death, the highest leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church wrestled with the accumulating evidence contradicting Ellen White’s claims. Unofficially agreeing that she was not verbally inspired and that her writings were untrustworthy in every area, they wondered how they could present their findings and still keep people’s faith in the Church, its organization, and its doctrines. On the other hand, as leaders who knew these things about Ellen White, how could they maintain their own integrity if they continued to teach the myths? And if they did teach the myths about Ellen White, weren’t they just setting up the Church for a future crisis when the truth did come out? What was to be their verdict?

It became evident to the leaders that Ellen White’s influence was too great and the alternatives too risky for any official statement to be made denying her Divine inspiration. As a result, Arthur Daniells, the General Conference President, requested the official minutes of their discussions at the 1919 Bible Conference be sealed for the next fifty years. His wish was carried out and the documents were not discovered until December of 1974, when Dr. F. Donald Yost found them wrapped in paper in a vault at General Conference headquarters.

Researcher Walter Rea

None of the evidence in the newly discovered minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference came as a surprise to now former Seventh-day Adventist Pastor and teacher, Walter Rea. As a one-time believer in the Divine inspiration of Ellen White, Rea had already stumbled onto evidence that she had copied the writings of other authors. As a result, Walter Rea spent years cataloging and verifying Ellen White’s sources. His research, later published in his book *The White Lie*, extensively verifies Ellen White’s copying.

In January, 1980, Walter Rea presented Church leaders with evidence demonstrating Ellen White had copied so much from other authors that one could hardly find an original thought or statement in any of her books. This was a bitter pill to swallow, and resulted in the Church sponsoring its own in-depth study of the evidence.

Research of Fred Veltman

The official Adventist research was conducted by Dr. Fred Veltman, then Chairman of Pacific Union College’s Department of Religion. Choosing to focus on what was thought to be the most authentic of Ellen White’s books, *The Desire of Ages*, Veltman spent eight years verifying Walter Rea’s evidence. After the initial Veltman report was presented to church leaders in 1988, summaries were published in the October and December, 1990, issues of the official *Ministry* magazine for Seventh-day Adventist clergy.

A Matter of Integrity

The official Veltman report plainly concluded Ellen White had not only voraciously copied the work of other writers, but both she and her co-workers had deliberately lied by claiming her writings were Divinely inspired originals. The Church's official Veltman report concluded:

"It is of first importance to note that Ellen White herself, not her literary assistants, composed the basic content of the *Desire of Ages* text. In doing so she was the one who took literary expressions (copied) from the works of other authors without giving them credit as her sources. Second, it should be recognized that Ellen White used the writings of others consciously and intentionally. . . . Implicitly or explicitly, Ellen White and others speaking on her behalf did not admit to and even denied literary dependency (copying) on her part." [*Ministry*, "The *Desire of Ages* Project: the Conclusions," November, 1990, p. 11.]

When Dr. Veltman was pointedly questioned about the fact that Ellen White had apparently lied in stating she only wrote what the Lord had shown her in vision, and lied about her copying from the works of other authors, Dr. Veltman replied: "I must admit at the start that in my judgment this is the most serious problem to be faced in connection with Ellen White's literary dependency (copying). It strikes at the heart of her honesty, her integrity, and therefore her trustworthiness." [*Ibid.*, p. 14.]

Nothing Original or Unique

In addressing the question of how widespread Ellen White's copying was, the Veltman report stated: "The content of Ellen White's commentary on the life and ministry of Christ, *The Desire of Ages*, is for the most part derived (copied) rather than original. . . . In practical terms, this conclusion declares that one is not able to recognize in Ellen Whites's writings on the life of Christ any general category of content or catalog of ideas that is unique to her." [*Ibid.*, p. 12.]

What Do Adventist Leaders Say Today About Ellen G. White?

With such a great mountain of evidence against the Divine inspiration of Ellen White coming from, and available to, the church's own leadership one might assume that Ellen White would have been quietly buried as an historical oddity long before now. Not so. The faithful are currently being tugged in two directions as leadership continues to reaffirm the Divine inspiration of Ellen White while it hints at a rewriting of her materials, possibly to simplify and/or eliminate her embarrassing errors and contradictions.

Comparing Ellen White With Jesus

Seventh-day Adventist leadership continues to reaffirm the Divine inspiration of Ellen White by officially linking her with Biblical and extra-Biblical prophets. For example the cover of the June 4, 1992, *Adventist Review* pictured a montage of Ellen White, Moses, John the Baptist, and Deborah. In case readers missed the point, page 9 specifically compared Ellen White's prophetic role to that of Miriam, Aaron, Elijah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Jesus! This linking is done even though Scripture is clear that no true prophet of God ever lied about the source of his/her message — and even though the Church's own official researcher, Dr. Fred Veltman stated that her denial of copying "strikes at the heart of her honesty, her integrity, and therefore her trustworthiness."

Rewriting Ellen White

In the November 19, 1992 issue of the *Adventist Review*, the faithful were given notice of the legitimacy of rewriting Ellen White. On page 8, Paul A. Gordon, secretary of the White Estate asked: "Is it legitimate to change, abridge, or simplify Ellen White's writing? The answer is yes. We can change, abridge, or simplify the *words*, but we do not have license to change the intended message. Here's why: Seventh-day Adventists do not hold to verbal inspiration. That means we do not believe that God dictated the words for Ellen White to use."

After pointing out that Ellen White herself simplified and corrected her writings, Gordon reassured the faithful with: “In the years since Mrs. White’s death in 1915, more than 50 new compilations or editions of Ellen White’s books have been prepared by the E. G. White Estate. In every case — including editions that have been abridged, condensed, or simplified — the intended message has never been lost; only the *wording* has been changed.” [*Adventist Review*, “Ellen G. White’s Writings — 2,” by Paul A. Gordon, November 19, 1992, p. 10.]

Perhaps that is the greatest proof Ellen White was not Divinely inspired. The Word of God states: “I the LORD do not change” (**Malachi 3:6**). Applying brother Gordon’s logic to the prophet Moses could yield a fascinating fourth commandment: “Remember to keep one day holy.” Who among *uninspired* mortals is wise enough to correct what God specifically had written for the admonition of His people? And who among *inspired* mortals *would* correct it?!

A Word to the “Little Flock”

EARLY EDITS FROM EARLY WRITINGS

Sabbath of the Lord thy God. But I saw that it read the same as when written on the tables of stone by the finger of God, and delivered to Moses in Sinai, “But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” (k) I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers; and that the Sabbath is the great question, to unite the hearts of God’s dear waiting saints. **And if one believed, and kept the Sabbath, and received the blessing attending it, and then gave it up, and broke the holy commandment, they would shut the gates of the Holy City against themselves, as sure as there was a God that rules in heaven above.** I saw that God had children, who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They had not rejected the light on it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth (l) and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully. This enraged the church, and nominal Adventists, as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. And at this time, God’s chosen, all saw clearly that we had the truth, and they came out and endured the persecution with us. And I saw the sword, famine, pestilence, and great confusion in the land. (m) The wicked thought that we had brought the judgments down on them. They rose up and took counsel to rid the earth of us, thinking that then the evil would be stayed. (n)

I saw all that “would not receive the mark of the Beast, and of his Image, in their foreheads or in their hands,” could not buy or sell. (o) I saw that the number (666) of the Image Beast was made up; (p) and that it was the beast that changed the Sabbath; and the Image Beast had followed on after, and kept the Pope’s, and not God’s Sabbath. And all we were required to do, was to give up God’s Sabbath, and keep the Pope’s, and then we should have the mark of the Beast, and of his Image.

In the time of trouble, we all fled from the cities and villages, (q) but were pursued by the wicked, who entered the houses of the saints with the sword. They raised the sword to kill us, but it broke, and fell, as powerless as a straw. Then we all cried day and night for deliverance, and the cry came up before God. (r) The sun came up, and the moon stood still. (s) The streams ceased to flow. (t) Dark heavy clouds came up, and clashed against each other. (u) But there was one clear place of settled glory, from whence came the voice of God like many waters, which shook the heavens, and the earth. (v) The sky opened and shut, and was in commotion. (w)

(k) Ex. 20:10. (l) Hosea 6:2,3. (m) Eze. 7:10-19. 2 Esdras 15:5-27. (n) 2 Esdras 16:68-74. (o) Rev. 13:15-17. (p) Rev. 13:18. (q) Eze. 7:15,

16. Luke 17:30-36. See Campbell’s Translation. (r) Luke 18:7, 8. (s) Hab. 3:11. (t) 2 Esdras 6:24. (u) 2 Esdras 15:34, 35. (v) Joel 3:16. Heb 12:25-27. (w) Rev. 6:14. Mat. 24:29.

A Word to the “Little Flock” is significant as the first primary source of literature published by James White and pertains directly to the visions of Ellen White. Deletions occur eleven times in subsequent editions as the text takes on the form of the “Spirit of Prophecy.” The red letter portions as reproduced here from page 19 are omitted from identical passages on pages 33 and 34 of *Early Writings*.

The “Spirit of Prophecy” and The “Testimony of Jesus”

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF TWO KEY PHRASES IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

“Our position on the testimonies (writings of Ellen White) is like the keystone to the arch. Take that out, and there is no logical stopping place till all the special truths of the message (Seventh-day Adventism) are gone. . . . Nothing is surer than this, that this message and the visions belong together and stand or fall together.”

— James White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 14, 1883

“The Bible predicts a genuine Sabbath reform in our day (Isaiah 58:13, 14). The Scriptures refer all questions ‘to the law and to the testimony’ (Isaiah 8:20), but there have been some in our midst who want the law without the testimony” (“testimony” referring to the writings of Ellen G. White).

— L.H. Christian, “Deflections From the Faith — Professing the Sabbath but Opposing God’s Message,” *Review and Herald*, page 6, Dec. 8, 1949

“Bind up the “testimony (announcement — Zodhiates), seal the law (teaching — Zodhiates) among my disciples. . . . And when they say to you, ‘Seek to those who have familiar spirits, and to wizards who peep and mutter,’ should not a people seek to its God, than for the living to (seek) to the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no dawn (light — KJV) to them . . . and they are driven to darkness.”

— Jay P. Green, Sr., Isaiah 8:16, 19, 20, 22. *A Literal Translation of the Bible, The Interlinear Bible*, 1985, 1986

“Do not think that I came to annul the Law or the Prophets: I did not come to annul, but to fulfill. Truly I say to you, ‘until the heavens and the earth pass away, in no way shall one iota or one tittle pass away from the law until all comes to pass.’ . . . ‘The heavens and the earth will pass away, but My Words will never ever pass away’.”

— Jesus, Matt. 5:17, 18; 24:36, *A Literal Translation of the Bible, The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Greene, Sr., 1985, 1986

“For it is not by following artfully constructed myths that we have made known to you the power and the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but because we were eyewitnesses to His greatness. . . . We have the prophetic word, which is certain; you do well to hold to it, as to a lamp shining in a dingy place, until the day dawns in light and the morning star rises in your hearts. But first, know this, that no prophecy in Scripture is subject to personal interpretation; for prophecy did not ever come by the will of man, but men, carried along by the Holy Spirit, have spoken from God.”

— Peter, 2 Peter 1:16, 19-21, *Acts and Letters of the Apostles*, Richard Lattimore, 1982

The prophetes, prophet, is the out-speaker, he who speaks out the counsel of God with the clearness, energy and authority which spring from the consciousness of speaking in God’s name and having received a direct message from Him to deliver Two things go to make the prophet, an insight granted by God into the divine secrets or mysteries and a communication to others of these secrets. It includes God’s concept of Grace, but with the warnings, announcements of judgment, etc., pertaining thereto. In the case of the O.T., their preaching was a foretelling of the salvation yet to be accomplished. In the N.T., prophecy was a publication of the salvation already accomplished, so far at least as it did not concern itself with realities still future.”

— Spiros Zodhiates, “Lexical Aids to the New Testament,” *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, 1984, page 1726

“The dragon was angry because of the woman, and went away to do battle with the rest of her seed, those who keep the commands of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. . . . I am your fellow slave and the fellow slave of your brothers who keep the testimony of Jesus. Give your worship to God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. . . . I saw the souls of those killed with

the ax for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God.”

— John, Revelation 12:17; 19:20; 20:4, *The Four Gospels and the Revelation*, Richard Lattimore, 1979

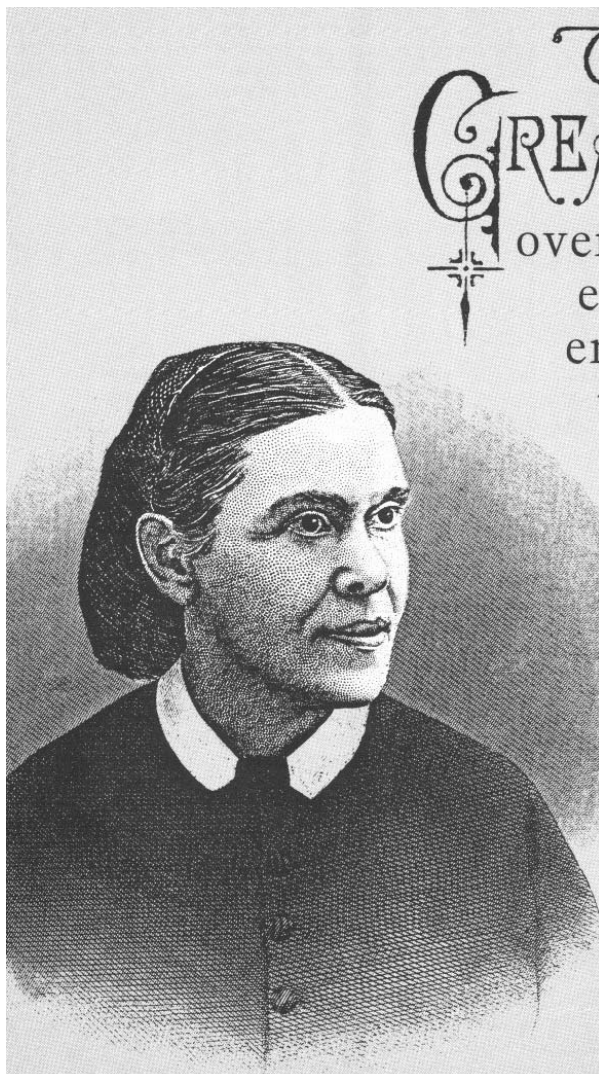
“Photius, ninety years of age, miserable abused for the testimony of Jesus, at Lyons in France; he afterwards died in prison, A.D. 179. . . . Phillip, Privatus, Florentine, Pontius, and many others, put to death for the testimony of Jesus Christ, in different places, during this persecution, till A.D. 270. . . . Claudius, Asterius, and Neon, brothers, crucified for the testimony of Jesus; also two women, Donuina and Theonilla tortured to death at Aegea in Cicily, A.D. 289.”

— “Of the defenseless Christians who suffered and were put to death for the testimony of Jesus, their Saviour, from the time of Christ, until the year A.D. 1660,” *The Bloody Theatre or Martyrs Mirror*, 1837 edition, page 96

“We shall find that they exactly correspond, in all particulars with the characteristics given of these kingdoms by the Spirit of Prophecy. . . . The Jewish Nation (is) often mentioned by the spirit of prophecy. . . . The Spirit of Prophecy informed Daniel that. . . .”

— William Thorp, *A Practical Guide to the Prophecies*, Edward Bickersteth, 1841, pages 27, 40, 72

NOTE: This article is taken from the July and August, 1993, issues of *The Sabbath Sentinel*.



The GREAT CONTROVERSY

over disconcerting deletions,
embarrassing edits, and
embellished rewriting of
the Spirit of Prophecy

“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
One stood by my side, and said:
‘God has raised you up, and has given
you words to speak to people and
to reach hearts, as He has given
to no other one.’”

— Ellen G. White
Testimony for the Church
Volume 5:661, 667

Thirty-Eight Reasons Why I Question Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines

Study No. 250

Acts 17:11 Search the scriptures daily and try to locate these thirty-eight Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines.

I John 4:1-4 Test the spirits. Can the doctrines of Ellen G. White withstand serious Biblical tests?

1. Are you aware that the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches that Ellen G. White was a divinely inspired prophetess? *Review Herald*, October 4, 1928.
2. Ellen G. White taught that *Satan* has taken *full possession* of the churches. *S.G.* Vol. 1, pp. 189-190.
3. The prayers of people in the *other* churches are an abomination. *S.G.* Vol. 1, p. 190.
4. Ellen G. White taught that eggs excite your *animal passions*. *Test.* Vol. 2, p. 362.
5. She taught that eggs should *not* be placed on your table. *They* are an *injury* to your children. *Test.* Vol. 2, p. 400.
6. Jesus called an egg “good” in **Luke 11:11-13**.
7. Ellen G. White taught that there were people alive in 1856 that would live to see the Seven Last Plagues! *Test.* Vol. 1, pp. 131-132.
8. Ellen G. White taught that there were people alive in 1856 that would live to be translated at the second coming of Jesus. *Test.* Vol. 1, pp. 131-132.
9. Please give me the name of someone who was at the 1856 Battle Creek Conference who is still alive today:
10. If Ellen G. White was alive under Mosaic Law, she would have been *stoned to death* for this false prophesy. Check **Deuteronomy 18:20-22**, **Deuteronomy 13:1-10** and **Matthew 7:15-20**.
11. Ellen G. White said that you should *dispose* of your house *before* the time of trouble. *Duty in View of the Time of Trouble*, January 31, 1849.
12. Ellen G. White tells us “*not to dishonor* God by applying to *earthly physicians*.” *Duty in View of the Time of Trouble*, January 31, 1849.
13. She said that angels carry golden cards as gate passes to get in and out of Heaven. Ask any Seventh-day Adventist to prove this point with scripture. *Early Writings*, pp. 37-39.
14. Ellen G. White *recommended wine* to people. *Test.* Vol. 2, p. 386.
15. Meat eaters have *perverted appetites*. *Healthful Living*, p. 97, 1897 ed. Now read **Exodus 12:1-11**.
16. The Seventh-day Adventists teach that Jesus had *OLDER BROTHERS!* *Desire of the Ages*, p. 71. Ask them to prove this point with scripture.
17. The “inspired prophetess” wrote that *colored people* should *not* be allowed to worship in the same buildings as whites. *Test.* Vol. 9, pp. 206, 214. Now read **Acts 10:34-35** and **Colossians 3:10-11**.
18. Ellen G. White taught that certain *races of men* are the result of amalgamation between man and beast. *S.G.* Vol. 3, pp. 64, 75. Question: Which?
19. The Seventh-day Adventist prophetess teaches that the rods of the pharaoh’s magicians of **Exodus 7:10-13** did *not* really become serpents. *S.G.* Vol. 3, pp. 205-206.
20. Ellen G. White bore *positive testimony against butter*. *Test.* Vol. 3, p. 21. Now compare **Isaiah 7:14-15**.
21. Ellen G. White wrote that “*cheese deranges* the stomach.” *Test.* Vol. 3, p. 136. Now compare **I Samuel 17:18** and **II Samuel 17:29**.
22. Ellen G. White would *not* have us buy a life insurance policy. *Test.* Vol. 1, p. 549. Compare **Proverbs 13:22**.
23. Ellen G. White claims that William Miller preached “the truth.” *Early Writings*, p. 233.
24. Ellen G. White claims that William Miller “plainly declared the *council of God*.” *Early Writings*, p. 234.
25. Ellen G. White claims that William Miller preached a “heavenly message.” *Early Writings*, p. 235.

26. William Miller taught that Jesus would return to the Earth on October 22, 1844!!
 27. Ellen G. White claims to have seen a *temple* in the Holy City. *Early Writings*, p. 32. But John in **Revelation 21:2, 22** said he saw *no temple* in the Holy City.
 28. Ellen G. White taught that *wigs* make people lose their reason and go *hopelessly insane*. *Christian Mothers*, No. 2, p. 121.
 29. Ellen G. White claims that blood was carried into the first apartment of the Old Testament tabernacle on a *daily basis*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 354-355.
 30. Ask any Seventh-day Adventist to prove point 29 from the Bible.
 31. Over 200 lines of Ellen G. White's "Inspired Writings" have been *omitted!*
 32. Yet, she wrote that "a prophet of God has *no right to alter* the word of God." *S.G.* Vol. 3, p. 10.
 33. Ellen G. White claimed to have seen Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, and Noah in a vision back in the 1840s. *The Word to the Little Flock*, p. 16.
 34. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not teach the conscious state of the dead, you can understand why these 22 lines of "Inspired Vision" were *removed!*
 35. I would think that suppression of "a divinely inspired message" would bring the *suppressor* under a *divine curse!* **Revelation 22:17-19.**
 36. Since Ellen G. White tells us that her articles are *not from human sources*, she had backed herself into a theological corner. Check *Testimonies* Vol. 5, pp. 64, 67, 682-683, 687.
 37. The SDA Church wants us to believe that *Satan repented* and tried to get back into heaven. *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-19. Now compare **I Timothy 1:3**. Teach no other doctrine!
 38. Tennis is a species of idolatry! *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 350.
- by Elder W.H. Olson Ω

Giving & Sharing, PO Box 100, Neck City, MO 64849

Church of God — Adventist!

The conventional Church of God view of Church history goes something like this: in the 1860s, the “good guys,” the Church of God, and the “bad guys,” the Seventh-day Adventists, separated over the issue of the validity of Ellen G. White’s visions, and the name for the Church. Since that time, the theory goes, there has been little interaction between the Church of God (COG) and the Seventh-day Adventists (SDA). Since the 1930s, SDA’s have become more and more Protestant in doctrine and practice, while the COG has largely remained steadfast to its distinctive doctrines.

While there is some validity to the above general statements, there have also been notable exceptions. In actuality, the history of the Church of God and Seventh-day Adventists has been intertwined throughout the last 150 years. We in the Church of God have much more in common with SDA’s than has been generally believed. By recognizing our common past, we should realize that we should work together in the present and in the future.

This commonality was brought to light in December, 1995, when SDA Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi released his book, *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*. In his article, “How I Came to Accept the Holy Days,” Dr. Bacchiocchi said he was surprised to find that “In every [SDA] church in which I presented my seminars during the latter half of 1995, I met some fellow believers who had been studying, and in some cases observing privately the annual Feasts. In fact, some of them have been observing the Feasts privately for many years.” Further, Bacchiocchi found support for observing the Holy Days in the writings of Ellen G. White herself! In her book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Mrs. White devoted an entire chapter to “The Annual Feasts.” She wrote, “Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles — a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeying from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways he has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth,” *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 540-541.

In the late 1980s, I observed the Feast of

Tabernacles with a small group in northern Arkansas. We were surprised to read in a local newspaper that a group of SDA’s were likewise observing the Festival nearby. Until Dr. Bacchiocchi’s recent revelation, I was not aware of how prevalent Holy Day observance was among SDA’s.

Holy Day teachings among Adventists are not of recent origin. Greenbury G. Rupert (1847-1922), was an SDA minister for thirty years, including several years as a missionary in South America. He was President of the Oklahoma SDA Conference, covering five states, at the time he left the Adventists at, or before, 1902. Rupert had known Ellen G. White personally for forty years, but was led to break with SDA’s when he published books contrary to official SDA teaching. As told in my book, *Six Papers on the History of the Church of God*, Rupert’s doctrines were in many ways similar to those of Herbert W. Armstrong. He observed the Holy Days, eschewed unclean meats, held to the Church name, “Church of God,” with local autonomy, rejected Christmas, Easter, and other pagan holidays, believed in tithing, Church eras, emphasized Bible prophecy in his preaching, and that the United States was part of Israel. It just so happens that Pasadena, California, figured prominently in the ministry of both Rupert and Herbert W. Armstrong. Persistent rumors remain that piles of Rupert’s magazine, *The Remnant of Israel*, were found in Armstrong’s basement and desk at the time of his death. Many Bible teachings extant in the offshoots of the Worldwide Church of God today, appear to be derived from the SDA’s through Rupert and then, Armstrong.

But, there is more! A.N. Dugger (1886-1975), the most noted Church of God, Seventh Day, leader of the 20th Century, was no doubt an avid reader of G.G. Rupert. Dugger and C.O. Dodd co-authored the

famous Church history, *A History of the True Religion*, which was first published in its present form in 1936, but written in parts in the late 1920s. When relating the formation of the Church of God in the 1860s, Dugger, in his book, referred to the original Church of God paper in Michigan as *Remnant of Israel*. Actually, the name of the paper, founded by Gilbert Cranmer, was *Hope of Israel*. Since Dugger was so familiar with Rupert's material, he mistakenly confused the names of Rupert's magazine with the COG magazine. *The Hope of Israel* was later moved to Iowa and then Stanberry, Missouri, and its name was changed to *The Bible Advocate*. In 1914, Dugger became the editor. In the previous year, 1913, G.G. Rupert wrote several articles in *The Bible Advocate*, which supported the Annual Holy Days. Both A.N. Dugger and Herbert W. Armstrong were strongly influenced by former SDA G.G. Rupert.

Besides the Annual Holy Days, Anglo-Israelism has been a distinctive issue in the Church of God. In 1929, two years before his ordination, Herbert Armstrong wrote an extensive paper on British Israel, demonstrating the United States and British identity as Manasseh and Ephraim. He submitted it to A.N. Dugger, then editor of *The Bible Advocate*. Dugger wrote to Armstrong on July 28, 1929, stating, "I have seen no work near its equal in clearness and completeness. You surely are right, and while I cannot use it in the paper at the present you may be assured that your labor has surely not been in vane [sic]." Dugger had obviously read other material on this subject prior to receiving Armstrong's paper. He personally agreed with the Anglo-Israel doctrine. Since Rupert had long been an advocate of identifying America and Britain as part of Israel, it is quite likely that Dugger had read Rupert's Anglo-Israel material before he read Armstrong's paper.

Yet, there is another line that likewise shows doctrinal ties between the Church of God and Seventh-day Adventists. Raymond Cole was one of the original Ambassador College students in 1947. He became an evangelist in Armstrong's Church, leaving in 1974 to form his own Church of God, The Eternal. Cole's mother was the niece of Merritt Dickinson (ca. 1864 - ?), a prominent Church of God, Seventh Day minister. It just so happens that Dickinson was practically a next door neighbor of Ellen and James White in Michigan. Merritt Dickinson married Ida Nichols, an SDA colporteur (seller of

religious books). Ida may have been the daughter of the famous SDA minister J.H. Nichols, who preached the first Sabbath sermon west of the Rocky Mountains, at Santa Rosa, California, in 1862. Apparently through self-study, Dickinson came to believe in Anglo-Israelism. In 1912, Dugger admitted to Dickinson that his Anglo-Israel ideas were true, but said that he couldn't get anywhere preaching that doctrine. In 1919, Dickinson published a series of articles in *The Bible Advocate*, later published as a tract, which stated that England is Ephraim, and the United States is Manasseh.

The intertwining trail of history linking Adventists with the Church of God, has many branches. About the early 1930s, A.H. Britten, a former SDA, founded a group in Western Australia, which today is known as "The Remnant Church of God." They observe the Holy Days, and appear to have very similar doctrines to those of us in the Church of God. Further research may or may not reveal connections of this remnant group with Rupert.

Even today, some Church of God groups claim to be the one and only true Church. They feel they have a corner on the Truth of the Almighty. They look with scorn on SDA's and other COG groups. The understanding that diverse groups of people in recent times have preserved God's Truth should inspire us, and humble us. God has a scattered people, the proverbial 5,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal. It is up to Him to regather His people. In the meantime, we should appreciate, and co-operate as much as possible, with brethren in many scattered groups who hold the same basic Truths of the Bible as we do. We have a common past. We should work together in the present and the future.

When someone asks me what Church I belong to, I say, "Church of God." Many are aware that Herbert W. Armstrong was an ordained minister of the Church of God, Seventh Day. Few know that prior to 1923, the Church of God, Seventh Day, was officially known as "Church of God (Adventist)." Our roots to Adventists do not end in the 1850s and 1860s, but were strongly developed in the period of 1902-1929, when ex-SDA Rupert's *Remnant of Israel* flourished.

In the late 1800s, the major Adventist preachers were anti-Trinitarians. By 1931, SDA's had fully accepted the Trinity doctrine.

Whereas in the mid 1900s, many SDA's were against the observation of Christmas and Easter, today many Adventists accept the pagan holidays. In the SDA Church, as well as the Church of God, there has been a struggle between the forces of liberalism and conservatism. Samuel Bacchiocchi's book on the role of women in the Church (he shows that the Bible forbids ordination of female elders) has resulted in his being banned from speaking at almost all SDA universities. Bacchiocchi condemns the observation of pagan holidays, and now is a supporter of the

annual Holy Days. Let us extend the right hand of fellowship to those in the Seventh Day Adventist Church who are fighting the same battle for Truth that we are fighting. Let us remember that we have a common history. Truly you could call us, "**Church of God — Adventist.**"

This article was written by Richard C. Nickels, author of *Six Papers on the History of the Church of God*, and *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, available from **Giving & Sharing, P O Box 100, Neck City, MO 64849.**

Church of God Meets Seventh-day Adventists

The open attitude of co-operation expressed by many Sabbatarians has exposed, for the first time, many in the Church of God to Seventh-day Adventists, and vice versa. Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi's recent acceptance of the Biblical Holy Days as being relevant for Christians today has had a profound effect upon the Church of God (a term I will use here to signify those who hold to the classical Worldwide Church of God beliefs). There is now a developing dialogue between church leaders and members of both Seventh-day Adventists and the various groups of the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God. *No*, this effort will not lead to organizational unification. *Yes*, it is, and will, lead to further cooperation and understanding.

Yet even at this stage, both sides know little about each other. We in the Church of God have not done our homework, and in many areas, we cannot engage in an intelligent discussion with SDA's on doctrines.

Comparison of Doctrinal Beliefs

The first step is for us to read each other's doctrinal statements. To facilitate this, the Bible Sabbath Association publishes a verbatim compilation of the statements of beliefs of many Sabbath-keeping organizations, entitled *Beliefs of Sabbath-Observing Groups*. Contact **The Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, Wyoming 82718**.

Neither Seventh-day Adventists, nor other church organizations are monoliths. However, published statements of belief should be taken at face value as reflecting the majority opinion of the group.

The statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists has twenty-seven points. Members of the Church of God can agree with many of these points.

We agree that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, that God the Eternal Father is the Creator and Sovereign of the Universe, and that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the Church. We both believe that man is created in the image of God with free moral agency and has sinned and therefore is subject to death. We believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, and that Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, and His suffering, death, and resurrection, made eternal life for man possible through repentance and accepting His atoning sacrifice for our sins. We believe in baptism by immersion.

The "Lord's Supper," which we prefer to call, "the Christian Passover," should be ac-

companied by foot washing. The emblems signify the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of our faith in Him. We share the belief that the great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments, and express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships, and are binding upon all people in every age.

We both believe in the Sabbath as God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. We believe that Christians should live modest and exemplary lives, and that marriage is a divine institution and to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman. We mutually stress the literal, personal, visible, imminent return of Jesus Christ to establish the millennium, the thousand-year reign of the Kingdom of God.

From an outsider's view, there is little detectable difference between Seventh-day Adventists and the Church of God.

Ten Areas of Difference

There are several areas of strong disagreement that we in the Church of God have with SDA's: (1) the Trinity, (2) Ellen G. White, (3) going to Heaven, and (4) the sanctuary and "Investigative Judgment," (5) the name of the Church, (6) vegetarianism, (7) military service, (8) when the Savior was crucified and resurrected, (9) observance of Easter and quarterly communion, and holidays of pagan origin, and (10) moral issues such as homosexuality, abortion, and alcohol. These differences are, in reality, quite significant.

Adventists Misunderstand Church of God

In the March 14, 1996, issue of *Adventist Review*, William G. Johnsson comments on

the doctrinal changes of the Worldwide Church of God. He says that their abandonment of the “Old Testament festivals” was the result of the honesty of their leaders, “who faced the biblical evidence and decided that some of their positions simply didn’t hold water.” Adventists, he believes, have a “wonderful opportunity” to bring into their fold former members of Armstrong’s movement who feel abandoned by their organization. Finally, Johnsson warns Adventists not to water down or abandon their distinctive: “the Sabbath, the Second Coming, the sanctuary, the [investigative] judgment, the mortality of the soul, and the Spirit of Prophecy [Ellen G. White].”

This demonstrates a lack of understanding of the doctrinal issues involved. Those who have recently left the Worldwide Church of God over doctrinal changes, such as the Sabbath, Holy Days, Trinity, etc., are hardly likely to join the Seventh-day Adventists, who support the Trinity and eschew the Holy Days. Even Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi’s recent book, *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*, does not actually support keeping the Holy Days in the same sense that the Church of God tradition teaches. The likelihood that SDA’s will officially accept the Holy Days is extremely remote.

Trinity and Ellen G. White

Seventh-day Adventists do not understand that the Trinity doctrine is a major doctrinal difference between themselves and the Church of God. Even though early SDA leaders of the nineteenth century were anti-trinitarians, by the 1930s, trinitarianism had become dominant. Point #3 of the SDA fundamental beliefs states: “The Trinity: There is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.” This statement is totally unacceptable by the Church of God.

Some Seventh-day Adventists downplay the teachings of Ellen G. White, saying their church does not hold her to be the later day prophetess, and do not revere her any more than we do Herbert Armstrong. This is not an honest presentation of the facts. Point #17 of the SDA Fundamental Beliefs states, “The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a

continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.”

One cannot be an SDA in good standing without believing in the inspiration of Ellen G. White. In the first SDA Manual, published in 1932, one of the twenty-one questions ministers were to ask every candidate for baptism and church membership was: “Do you believe in the gift of prophecy which has been manifested in the remnant church through the ministry and writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White?”

Anyone who has seriously studied the writings of Ellen G. White can find clear evidence of failed prophecies, contradictions, plagiarism, and heretical teachings. The source of her visions was not the Creator God.

Going to Heaven and Investigative Judgment

SDA’s believe that at the Second Coming, Christ will raise the righteous dead, and with the righteous living, take them to Heaven while the earth lies desolate for 1,000 years. The Church of God teaching is that the millennium will be on this earth made new, and thereafter, Heaven comes to earth in the new heavens and new earth.

Adventists believe that in 1844, Christ entered the Holy of Holies in Heaven, and began the Investigative Judgment, deciding the fate of all mankind, making atonement for those who will be saved. For SDA’s, atonement did not happen on the stake of calvary, it began to be accomplished in 1844. In the words of SDA eminent Uriah Smith, “Christ did not make the atonement when He shed His blood upon the cross.” SDA’s believe that our sins have been collectively piling up in the Holy of Holies in Heaven, but in 1844, Christ moved into the apartment and began to cleanse the Heavenly Sanctuary of sin.

To the Church of God, this borders on blasphemy. According to **Hebrews 9:12, 25-28, and 10:14**, we believe that the atonement has been completed, and upon repentance, faith, and baptism, our sins are blotted out, **Acts 3:19**. God’s Heavenly Sanctuary cannot be defiled by human sin.

Other Doctrinal Differences

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi is a controversial figure, even in his own SDA circles.

Some SDA ministers do not like his support of the Holy Days. Bacchiocchi's position opposing women preachers has generated much opposition. The Church of God position is in favor of Holy Days and against women preaching.

Historically, a major point of difference has been the name of the Church. Ellen G. White labeled those who insisted on the Biblical name, "Church of God," as "fanatics."

Many SDA's are vegetarians. Those who are not vegetarians ignore Ellen G. White's writings. She wrote in her *Testimonies for the Church* (1872), that her visions gave "positive testimony against tobacco, spirituous liquors, snuff, tea, coffee, *flesh meats, butter, spices, rich cakes, mince pies, a large amount of salt, and all exciting substitutes used as articles of food.*" If she were a prophetess, you would think that all real SDA's would follow her.

From its recent origins in the 1860s, the Sabbath-keeping Church of God has been opposed to military service, bearing arms, or to come under military authority. SDA's will, if conscripted, serve as medics.

Dr. Bacchiocchi's book, *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection*, supports the SDA view of the traditional Good Friday crucifixion, Easter Sunday resurrection. The Church of God holds to a Wednesday crucifixion, Sabbath resurrection. This leads

to another difference: SDA's observe Easter, Christmas, and a quarterly communion, while the Church of God eschews holidays of pagan origin, and holds to the quartodeciman annual Passover. It has only been the recent generation of SDA's who have acquired the general practice of observing pagan holidays. Bacchiocchi lambasts this practice, but he does not appear to reflect the majority SDA view on this subject.

In recent years, SDA's have equivocated on issues such as homosexuality and abortion. There is a strong homosexual movement within the SDA church, and their leaders have been permitted to speak at SDA colleges. Also, SDA's do not take a strong stand against abortion. The Church of God believes that the Bible condemns homosexual acts, and prohibits abortion.

Finally, Bacchiocchi's book, *Wine in the Bible*, purports the questionable theory that all the "good" references to wine in the Bible describe unfermented grape juice, while all the "bad" references point to fermented alcoholic wine. He supports point #21 of the SDA fundamental beliefs, that alcoholic beverages are "harmful to our bodies." The Church of God believes the Bible supports the moderate consumption of alcohol, which is beneficial to our health.

— written by Richard C. Nickels Ω