

TESTIMONY OF A FORMER SDA PASTOR

- A SYNOPSIS OF THE FAITH AND THE SECRET TO ITS BONDAGE -

BY: PASTOR J. ISAAC RICHARDS
GOOD SHEPHERD BIBLE SABBATH FELLOWSHIP
AN INDEPENDENT SEVENTH DAY BIBLE BAPTIST CONGREGATION

“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren...who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.”

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.”

– Romans 9:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16.

Preface and Background

In writing this essay, I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to God for bringing me “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9), and that in more ways than one. My first experience in being brought out of darkness was my own conversion to Christ, where I was saved from the bondage of sin and a destructive path as a youth, and brought to my knees in a dark place where I gave my heart and life over to Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. It was on March 28, 1998, that I accepted Christ as my personal Lord and Savior and was born-again to a new life. Being raised by a spiritualist New Age mother who was also a practicing Wiccan witch, and having no concept of Christ, or God, or salvation, growing up as a lost and reckless youth, I will remain eternally grateful to the God of heaven for saving my soul from the pit of wretchedness and sin that I was in. It is truly only the love and grace of God that brought me from the “gutter-most” to the “utter-most”. Praise His name!

The second time I was brought out of darkness into the light of the Lord, was my departure from Seventh-day Adventism and its unbiblical doctrines, into the full light of gospel truth which is built and based upon the sure foundation of God’s word. It is this second story that I now share with you, dear reader, that you may escape from the dangers that lurk in the secret chambers of the SDA cult. Although these are strong words, it is the truth nonetheless.

The Journey Begins

Shortly after giving my heart to Jesus, I obtained a Bible and began to pour over its pages so that I might learn more about this new way of life and how to live as a Christian. I now believed in the true God of heaven, had accepted the one true religion of Christianity, had placed my faith in the Son of God and Messiah as my Savior, and rested my confidence on the Bible as God’s Book. But I still had a thirsting to understand more. Upon reading the scripture passage on the ten commandments for the first time (Exodus 20:1-17), I learned about the Sabbath commandment and immediately began to keep it. Not knowing any other way, and never having been educated or raised in any Christian

church, I innocently began resting on Saturday and Sunday (Sunday being understood by tradition in society even though I was not familiar with any specific Christian doctrines, statements of faith, or theology). I continued in this way for some time until I discovered a Seventh-day Adventist television station called “3ABN”, which is an abbreviation for “3 Angels Broadcasting Network” – a moniker based on the “3 angels’ messages” of Revelation 14:6-12 which the SDA church is founded upon.

Being entirely ignorant of what a Seventh-day Adventist even was, I began watching the programs on this station, studying their doctrines day and night, and was especially taken by their emphasis on prophecy. Many of their doctrines seemed solidly founded on the Bible, and so I accepted each doctrine one-by-one until eventually I was indoctrinated into the whole system. One point of their teachings in particular, however, very early on caused me much discomfort and many questionings in my mind, and that was the fact that the Adventists professed faith in a modern-day female prophetess named Ellen G. White. My questions, specifically, revolved around why God would need a modern-day prophet to guide a church when they had the full light of the Bible in front of them? why God would choose a woman? and whether this was not a sort of cult similar to Mormonism, or Mary Baker Eddyism of the Christian Scientists, for they too also stressed the necessity of believing in extra-biblical sources and a modern-day prophet in order to join their churches.

Over the next several weeks and months, however, as I continued to study with the Adventists and to watch their television programming with such series as “Keepers of the Flame”, various Revelation seminars, etc. – which seemed to detail the history of the Christian church and the rise of Millerism, Adventism, and the supposed calling of Ellen Harmon (this was her maiden name prior to her marriage to James White) to a prophetic ministry – I became convinced that there was so much truth these people had in regard to the Sabbath, the connected doctrines of the second coming and resurrection, and many lines of prophecy, that surely they must also be correct about Ellen White possessing the “spirit of prophecy”. I made a profession of faith to join the SDA Church in late 1998 and was later baptized.

Problems with Ellen White

Seventh-day Adventists hold to 28 Fundamental Beliefs, one of which is the teaching that Ellen G. White possessed the true gift of prophecy, and that her writings are an authoritative guide for the church today. [1] In studying with the Adventists, in order to assuage my doubts and concerns on this point, I was taught that she passed many tests of being a true prophet by accompanying physical phenomena (having open, unblinking eyes during vision; cessation of breathing; supernatural strength, etc.); and was also told of a childhood accident she had which apparently caused her education to cease at the third grade. These claims, coupled with the apparent ability to write her famous “Conflict of Ages” series of books, which were full of scripture and very beautifully written, seemed to offer convincing proof that her gifts and literary genius could only be proof of a divine calling of God on her life.

All of these things, of course, were only deceptively presented by the SDA Church, and at that time I had no knowledge whatsoever of the many problems the church had had over the years fighting the cascade of claims of plagiarism and literary theft that Ellen White and what she termed her “copyists” had committed in writing and composing her

most famous books. [2] These charges were raised many, many times over the years (and still continue to this day) by not only secular authorities, but also by many people within her own church, some of whom were formerly her most ardent followers and disciples. [3]

Something which the reader must understand about Seventh-day Adventism is that it is a systematic doctrinal framework – with each piece and part of their theology fitting nicely within an entire picture which then spells the whole – and this is a very attractive part of their church. For the new and young in faith, it is a very intellectual religion, using many arguments and proofs especially from the Old Testament types and symbols of the sanctuary. The majority of their doctrines (at least today) are quite orthodox and would not be objected to by mainstream Christianity. Their Statement of Faith upholds the Bible as being authoritative; an orthodox view on the Godhead; a confession of faith in the atonement and Christ's substitutionary death on the cross; a visible second coming of Christ; a bodily resurrection of both righteous and wicked, etc. [4]

It is the same also with their major views on prophecy: the presentation of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, are, for the most part, simply a re-telling of established Protestants views of the 16th through 19th centuries. [5] Even their position on the Sabbath and non-immortality of the soul can find counterparts and apologists throughout Christian history who took these same positions. [6] So the majority of their foundational doctrines are, in fact, nothing new. Dig a little deeper, however, and you will begin to get to the heart of the problem.

The Heart of the Problem

The root issues with Seventh-day Adventism are numerous and complicated. I will here in this essay only deal with these issues on a surface level in order to simply cover the problems, and will allow my other articles to explain in further detail some of these issues.

Two of the major and most concerning problems in SDA doctrine are: 1) they do not believe that the Bible is the foundation of the Christian's faith, but hold to the Bible and Ellen White's writings as being equally authoritative in matters of faith and doctrine [7]; and 2) they do not believe that Christ's sacrifice on the cross offered complete atonement and pardon, but that the atonement was continued in heaven and not available for completion until after 1844. [8] I will later offer quotes by their own authors to prove these points.

To be clear, however, the lynchpin of the whole system of Adventism is based firmly on faith in Ellen White being an inspired prophetess and messenger of God. There is not one pivotal doctrine in the whole system which has not been supposedly confirmed by "visions and dreams". While most Seventh-day Adventists would assume that their faith is based on the scriptures, once you present to them what the Bible clearly teaches regarding the atonement, the most holy place ministry of Christ, etc., they will protest and proceed to engage in an almost superhuman effort to force the scriptures to say the exact opposite of what they plainly teach in order to fit the Bible into their framework of theology which has been "confirmed" through what they term "the testimony of Jesus" (i.e.: the writings of Ellen White). This is conclusively proven by the church

disfellowshipping anyone who holds to the traditional Protestant view of the atonement, and who attempts to prove their faith by the Bible alone. [9]

In matters of rejecting biblical truth in favor of unprovable theories, take, for example, the most famous SDA doctrine of all – what they call their “central pillar”; that is, the central doctrine which forms the basis and foundation of all the rest of their peculiar doctrines, and without which the entire system would come crashing down: the 2300-day prophecy and “cleansing of the sanctuary” of Daniel 8:14. [10] Their chief proponent and founder of the Advent movement, William Miller, taught that this scripture passage referred to the second coming of Christ on October 22, 1844, and that the “sanctuary” represented the earth which would be cleansed by fire at the Advent of our Lord. [11] Of course the words of Jesus Himself that, “of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father [only]” (Mark 13:32), meant nothing to Miller and his associates who apparently thought themselves wiser than Christ to know the exact day that He would come to earth – even though Jesus said that He Himself did not know the day nor the hour, but the Father only!

Once the day passed uneventfully (as it was destined to do, for the “scripture cannot be broken”), Miller and the vast majority of his associates humbly confessed their error and rejoined the Christian body of churches at large whom they had formerly condemned as apostates and “Babylon” for not accepting the false teachings of predicting an exact day for the coming of Christ. Some of the “Adventists” (for that was the name they adopted during the Millerite movement of the 1830’s and early 40’s), however, continued to predict future dates for the Lord to come based on complicated prophetic theses, all of which were doomed to fail. [12]

One of these Adventist groups who continued on after the “Great Disappointment” of 1844 strongly believed in visions and dreams. A young black man named William Foy who had earlier joined the Millerites, claimed to have received several visions in 1842 and on. [13] Miller himself had written of two dreams he had had which were received as being prophetic in nature. [14] Hiram Edson, a follower of Miller, had also claimed to see a vision in his corn field after the disappointment which purported to explain what had actually happened in 1844 when Jesus did not come. [15] One of the foremost leaders of the later Adventists who was also considered the “apostle of the Sabbath”, Joseph Bates, also claimed to have had several dreams where he was directed to certain cities to preach the Advent doctrines. [16] Visionaries and prophets were common in these days of revival cropping up across the United States during the Second Great Awakening and Second Advent Movement, and the disappointed believers after October 22, 1844, were desperately looking for messages of encouragement during those days.

Ellen Gould Harmon was a young seventeen-year-old girl, frail and sickly, who was also an ardent believer in Miller’s doctrines. She later wrote that, from her youth, she had had several supernatural experiences and dreams showing her Jesus, heaven, and other strange symbols such as a bleeding lamb tethered to a temple. [17] Shortly after the disappointment, in December of 1844, she claimed to have received a vision of a narrow path leading up to heaven upon which Advent believers were travelling. Behind them was a “bright light which shone all along the path” which an angel then supposedly told her represented “the midnight cry”. [18] The midnight cry was the teaching by a man named Samuel Sheffield Snow that Jesus would come to earth on the 10th day of the 7th Jewish month which, he claimed, would be on October 22, 1844. He based this spurious date on the claim that Karaite reckoning – a small subset of Israel – affirmed this date being in

1844 based on their ancient time keeping records. [19] Other evidence suggests, however, that both rabbinic and Karaite reckoning placed Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, on September 23 of 1844, and not October 22. [20] But Ellen White's visions confirmed October 22; therefore, the date had to be right! Incidentally, S.S. Snow would later go on to reject his own movement, claiming to be Elijah the prophet, and then later claiming to be Jesus Himself. He would die in ignominy and obscurity, never realizing the results of his false prophecies. [21]

The Advent band after the disappointment would later go on to claim that Miller's prophetic reckonings were correct – only the *event* was wrong – and that what had actually happened on October 22, 1844, was that Jesus had gone in to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to finally offer His blood in full atonement for the sins of God's people. Up until that time, He had been stuck in the holy place since His ascension to heaven in 31 AD, only offering intercession and temporary forgiveness for 1,810 years, for those who had trusted in Him since the days of Adam up until 1844. But on October 22 (the claim went), Jesus had entered into the presence of God in the most holy place there to minister His shed blood in full atonement and to offer the blotting out of sin for the truly repentant. The catch, however, is that this atonement was only beneficial for those who understood and accepted William Miller's teachings (yes, the teachings of Christ coming to cleanse the earth by fire in 1844, which never took place), and that all those who had rejected the failed Millerite movement could not be benefited by Christ's atonement. [22] Slowly, over about 13 years, the doctrine of the "investigative judgment" was added to this framework, and the teaching developed that believer's sins were being called into account before God with the books of judgment opened since 1844. The strangest part of all is that the very proponents who introduced these doctrines – of Christ entering the most holy place in 1844, and the very date of October 22, 1844 itself – later denied these doctrines and left Adventism. William Miller, Samuel Snow, Hiram Edson, and Otis Crosier, all left Adventism shortly thereafter, while Ellen White, her husband James, and Joseph Bates all continued believing the delusion.

Something that is not told to regular church members today is that Ellen's earliest visions were later altered with sentences and whole paragraphs removed in order to give an appearance that she did not teach certain things which she later rejected as un-biblical. For example, her first visions confirmed what the Millerites had been teaching since at least 1842: that all the Protestant churches were rejected of God because of their failure to accept Miller's teachings. But she went further than this. She also claimed that the *whole world* was lost and doomed after 1844, rejected of God for rejecting what Adventists called the "first angel's message", or "judgment hour message", of Revelation 14:6-7. [23] Modern-day SDA apologists vehemently deny that she meant what she plainly wrote in regular English; while the early SDA church plainly denied that she wrote these things at all. It was only after certain SDA ministers defected from the group and brought early manuscripts along with them as evidence, that the church changed strategies from denial of her early writings and visions, to defending them and attempting to change their meaning. It is an established historical fact that she taught these errors from the very beginning of her ministry, and it is a fact that these teachings were later removed from her writings. [24] The question must then be asked: does God sanction deception in one of his prophets altering their writings to give a different sense and meaning later on to what they wrote? Do "inspired writings" need to be changed if they are truly inspired? I will let the reader judge whether God works in that manner.

*“That by two immutable things, **in which it was impossible for God to lie**, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” – Hebrews 6:18.*

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” – Isaiah 8:20.

Early Ministry Experience

Of course, as a young man and new Adventist I knew nothing of any of this. I simply accepted what I had learned and been taught in the multiple Revelation seminars, Bible study guides, books, television programs, and other SDA propaganda I had been fed. And it is the same with everyone else. For the SDA church to play the honest part it would mean to deny their own claimed gift of having an inspired prophetess in their midst. And of course this would mean that everything she ever said, or doctrine she advocated, would have to be investigated in the light of Bible truth. But this will never happen; yea, it cannot happen, without the entire system of Adventism collapsing. Therefore, the entire system of Seventh-day Adventism is based upon dishonesty and false prophetic reckoning that predicted the second coming of Jesus in 1844, but which ended only in bitter disappointment. [25]

Having given my heart to Jesus as a young man, I was enlisted by the Holy Spirit into service for God as a Bible worker and evangelist, sharing my faith and testimony to all who would listen. I worked on the streets for Christ, going door-to-door, sharing Bible studies in homes and inviting people to church for seminars where they could learn more about Seventh-day Adventism. I eventually was ordained an elder in the Southern California Conference in 2002, where I continued to serve in a local church as one of the youth pastors and as a local evangelist. In 2004, I traveled to Western New York with an evangelism team and led out in a 6-week evangelistic series which led to a church being formed. I became the pastor of this little flock and helped to organize it in the New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists the following year where I was also ordained to ministry in pastoral lines. This same year, in 2005, I was also married to my wife who joined me in New York to assist in ministry to our new church.

We stayed there for almost two years and then decided to move back West to Washington state where we would later have our first daughter. Prior to leaving New York, I had struggled with being supported by my small church since I was mandated by the Conference to send all tithes to them while not being supported as the pastor of the church that I had raised up. I was learning more and more about the hierarchical system of Adventism which is based on an episcopal, rather than congregational, form of church government. [26] The former church I had been an elder of in California had gotten shut down and its property confiscated only a year after I went to New York, due to the Conference firing the pastor of that church but the church members defying the Conference decree and choosing to hire him on privately to keep him as their pastor. The Southern California Conference had actually taken the church to court and gotten a court-ordered judgment against them to vacate the property, and then afterward simply locked the church doors and let the church remain closed. Most people outside of Adventism have no idea that, in order to be a part of the sisterhood of churches, a local church must

surrender their church title and property deed and sign it over to the Conference, thus surrendering their own property rights to a church that perhaps their own members have built with their own hands. [27] Church tithe must also be sent to the Conference to be used as the Executive committee sees fit. [28] Many churches have been disfellowshipped and excommunicated for not sending their tithe and have then been evicted off of their own land which they bought with their own money. It is an unconscionable form of hierarchical control that is papal in nature, without any semblance of scriptural authority or example from the New Testament teachings of Jesus or the apostles.

Prior to my resignation as the church pastor, my church members in New York wrote letters to the Conference officials imploring them to support me as their pastor and to find a way to keep me there. I received a phone call one evening from the Executive Secretary and Ministerial Director of the Conference (the same man who had ordained me a year or so prior), offering that the Conference would pay me a stipend and provide health insurance for me to stay. The contingency, however, was that I should be willing to pursue further education in their colleges in order to be considered for further advancement and employment. I had, at the time, serious reservations regarding what I believed was a liberal theological education that would cause me to question the inspiration of the Bible, the literal creation week, as well as fundamental SDA beliefs. I did not know it at the time, but the root cause of why so many pastors who go through SDA seminary end up questioning SDA pillar doctrines, is because they learn about the same faulty history which I only later learned, as well as the spurious claims of Ellen White. It is a largely unknown fact by the SDA membership at large, that the early church leaders held a Bible Conference in 1919, shortly after Ellen White's death in 1915, where the vast majority of Church leadership – including the General Conference President himself – questioned the reliability and inspiration of Ellen White's writings. [29] One of the main problems, they admitted, was holding to a plenary inspiration of her writings which few of them believed in. Secondly, was the glaring problem of blatant plagiarism in her writings from countless other sources. Problems continued to ensue over this issue, resulting in a decision to remove from circulation her book, "Sketches from the Life of Paul", which was found to be, in many places, an almost word-for-word copy of an earlier book written and published by British scholars nearly thirty years before. [30] The conundrum, however, was how to tell regular church members about these problems without totally destroying their faith in the "spirit of prophecy" and in the pillar doctrines which comprised Adventism. The unfortunate decision was made to leave these problems as they were and to not publicize them to the people.

Becoming an Independent Pastor

The spirit of religious liberty is the spirit of Jesus Christ. Thus, my eventual change from an SDA pastor to a Baptist pastor. Unlike Adventism, the Baptist faith possesses distinct principles of Biblical Christianity and religious freedom unlike any other faith or Christian sect in the world. Thus C.H. Spurgeon could write:

"We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ,

and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a Government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor I believe any body of Baptists ever held it to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer, as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the State, to prostitute the purity of the Bride of Christ to any alliance with the government, and we will never make the Church, although the Queen, the despot over the consciences of men." — *Charles Spurgeon (From The New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. VII, Page 225)*.

Baptists hold as sacred the following principles:

1. The supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Church as well as the individual soul.
2. The supreme authority of the scriptures as the inerrant and infallible interpreter of God's will to man, and the Christian's sole rule of faith and practice.
3. Soul competency: absolute freedom to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience, and ultimate accountability to God alone in matters of faith.
4. Regenerate church membership and believer's baptism by immersion.
5. Congregational polity in church governance and the priesthood of all believers, without distinction between "clergy" and "laity".
6. The absolute separation of church and state.

Without knowing it, I had held to these principles from the very inception of my walk with Christ. When I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I was still a Baptist at heart even though I had never known a Baptist or studied with them. When I worked within the confines of the SDA Conference, yet I still held firm to the principles of individual freedom and liberty of soul to think and act independently from man, for that is what true manhood is – the ability to think, reason, believe, and live in the sight of God with a pure conscience, rather than to blindly follow fallible men. Liberty of conscience and soul liberty is nothing less than recognizing the rights of our fellow men and women to form their own opinions without threats of coercion, or mental, emotional, or bodily harm. It is the spirit of Jesus Christ, and it is the recognition that we are created in the image of God to develop a personal relationship with our Creator apart from the dictates of sinful and fallen human beings.

The spirit of control over the minds, souls, bodies, and consciences of our fellow men is nothing less than the spirit of Satan, the great persecutor of Christ and man, which was so nefariously acted out by the papal power of the Dark Ages. It is the spirit of popery, and not of Christianity.

And so, doing what seemed natural to my conscience as a Christian man, after I left my church in New York, I continued to preach the gospel and to raise up churches,

but this time as independent churches outside of any SDA Conference control. I became an independent pastor, the same as I still am today, and the same as I always was.

I labored in California for two years, raising up a church in the Antelope Valley of Southern California, and left it only after ensuring another pastor was in place to take over once I left. My wife and I had a son while there, and we soon left for Southern Oregon where we were able to purchase our first country property.

In Oregon we continued to labor, organizing a new church of believers, and later also took over a second church to assist in re-organizing it under new leadership. There we added to our little family a third child, another son. I helped train two young pastors to take my place, and, again, after a little over two years in that place we sold our 2 ½ acre property and moved to Montana where we purchased 40 acres of land in the mountains.

In Montana we labored among our neighbors and started a house church, even baptizing one of our members; and it was also there where we added several children to our growing household. Two sons and a daughter joined us in our humble mountain home.

While still living in Montana, I began to travel extensively, raising up a small church in Idaho, and visiting other churches in many states. I also traveled extensively overseas, preaching in camp meetings, conferences, and in the mission field, baptizing souls as I preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. I visited over 26 countries on 5 different continents during the space of a few short years, and during this time also started a mission project in East Africa which we still own and operate today. Although at this point in my life and experience I still whole-heartedly believed in Adventism and was dedicated wholly to its cause, yet I also believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in winning souls to Him. Coming from a non-Adventist background, I never had an innate loyalty to the SDA denomination in any particular way, as much as I had a loyalty to Jesus Christ and the truth of the Bible (as I understood it). I also recognized from my own personal experience of once being outside of the grace of God and lost in the world, that souls needed the gospel of Christ more than anything else. This is still my philosophy today. That much has never changed.

Conflict and Fanaticism in Adventism

During this period of time, while engaged in independent pastoral ministry, over the space of about seven years – from 2007 to 2014 – I began to notice some serious problems within Adventism as a whole. It was a gradual realization, but over time I became more and more troubled. In 2006, while living in Washington state, I was first introduced to what is termed “historic Adventism”. This is a sub-set of Adventism that believes in earnestly championing what they term as the “historic” doctrinal platform of the original faith of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers and of Ellen White. They are zealous defenders of Ellen White’s writings, and almost unanimously consider one a heretic if they hold any opinion contrary to their own – *especially* if it contradicts what they believe Ellen White’s writings clearly support and teach. I became interested in their many conservative positions on doctrine, diet, and dress, and our family adopted most, if not all, of their practices. But it troubled me that there were so many divergent opinions within these groups – sometimes to the point of all-out conflict between them – all the while claiming Ellen White for their support. Among these fringe groups there were those who kept Old Testament Jewish feast days; believed in pronouncing only the sacred name

of God and Christ, and thought one to be lost if they even dared to mention the Greek name of “Jesus”. Some believed Christ to be a created being; and others believed God did not kill or destroy any of His creatures, not even in judgment. Others believed in strict dress codes of a specific style and adhering to a strict vegetarian diet; while others took their dietary restrictions to even further extremes, positively declaring that only raw foods could be eaten in order to obtain a sinless state. Some even went so far as to declare the eating of leavened bread to be a sin, while others claimed that cashews were poisonous. Other fanatical health reformers had their sanitariums shut down after starving their patients to death; while still others swore by the benefits of yogurt and coffee enemas, and called down curses and anathemas against anyone who would dare to take an aspirin or any other kind of “drug medication”. An elder in one of my churches in Idaho claimed that for a man to shave his facial hair was a sin, reminiscent of the Egyptian pagans, and confidently declared that Christians were still bound to the Old Testament Levitical laws in their fullness. Another prominent ministry leader during this time lost his mind, claiming to be a prophet and a modern-day Elijah, and later exalted his claims even further to declare himself “Melchizedek, the voice of God”. Fanatical winds of doctrine blew throughout the ranks of these people, and I felt caught in the midst of it all.

But the most disturbing part of all this gross fanaticism was the fact that each of these groups – every single one of them – claimed Ellen White’s support for their aberrant and heterodox teachings by quoting profusely from her writings.

In 2013, my wife and I were presented with quotes from Ellen White by well-meaning and well-intentioned people to stop having children based on her counsel to practice “temperance” in the marriage bed and to not multiply our family size beyond what would honor God. In some of these counsels, we were struck with her plain and almost callous rebukes of missionary families who had had children, giving it to be distinctly understood that God was displeased and angry with them for pro-creating. In conjunction with receiving these quotes, it was also around this time that we discovered the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s official position on abortion, advocating a “woman’s right to choose” (i.e.: to kill her baby), and also learned that some Adventist hospitals performed elective abortions on demand and for profit. [31] These things together were greatly disturbing to us. We were, and still are, strongly “pro-life”, believing that it is God who gives life and opens the womb to conceive. My wife and I decided at this time to make this issue a personal family study, and we spent the next several months studying this point from the Bible. At the conclusion of our Bible study, we understood quite plainly and unequivocally from the scriptures that God blesses with life; that He loves giving life; that God loves children; that the promises of scripture are replete with specific commands to “be fruitful and multiply”, as well as promises to bless the womb and to “multiply your seed as the stars for multitude”! Children are considered to be a blessing in scripture, not a curse or inconvenience to be destroyed or discarded at will; they are the “heritage of the Lord”, and welcomed by Jesus!

We decided that the SDA Church had its priorities backward on this point, and we found no sympathy with Ellen White’s views on family size, nor her counsel to others on having children. And so it was, in that same year of 2013, that we officially withdrew our membership from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We continued to remain faithful to our understanding of SDA doctrine, and also to the “spirit of prophecy” (still believing Ellen White to be “inspired” when in vision), but a serious seed of doubt was planted in

our minds at this time over Ellen White's general counsels, her spirit, and how truly inspired she was overall.

With God's blessing, we would go on to have several more children over the years which added only joy and happiness to our family! Today we are the happy parents of 9 children, 8 of whom are with us at home.

“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” – Psalm 127:3-5.

The Secret to its Bondage

No Seventh-day Adventist will ever admit that they hold Ellen White's writings in higher regard than the Bible. Not one. But it is absolutely true nonetheless. Adventists claim that they have no other creed than the Bible, and that the Bible is their standard of faith and doctrine, but that is not true or honest. It is as plain as day from their own Statement of Faith (28 Fundamental Beliefs) which I have alluded to before, that they believe in “the Bible *and* the Spirit of Prophecy”. Therefore, it is not the Bible alone which is their standard of faith, but the Bible *and* the writings of Ellen White.

Throughout her lifetime, Mrs. White wrote such things as the following:

“The Lord has given a lesser light [referring to her own writings] to lead men and women to the greater light [of the Bible].” – *The Review and Herald, January 20, 1903.*

“The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy.” – *Letter 92, 1900.*

“The Lord...has not given any additional light to take the place of his Word. This light is to bring confused minds to his Word.” – *Letter 130, 1901.*

“God has...promised to give visions in the ‘last days’; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth.” – *Early Writings, p. 78.*

“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 [Ellen White's writings]. There was never a time when God instructed his people more earnestly than he instructs them now concerning his will and the course that he would have them pursue.” – *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 661.*

“At that time [after the 1844 disappointment]...the power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled to define what is truth and what is error. As the points of our faith were thus established [through her visions], our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit [through the “spirit of prophecy”]. I would be taken off in vision, and explanations would be given me.” – *Gospel Workers, p. 302.*

“I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several *Testimonies for the Church*, given for the people of God. Here, said I, the cases of nearly all are met. The sins they are to shun are pointed out. The counsel that they desire can be found here, given for other cases situated similarly to themselves. God has been pleased to give you line upon line and precept upon precept. But there are not many of you that really know what is contained in the *Testimonies*.” – *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, page 605*.

These are only a few quotations of the hundreds of thousands of pages written by Ellen White over her lifetime of prophetic ministry to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. From these often times seemingly contradictory quotes, we learn that she claimed to be a “lesser light” faithfully pointing her people to the “greater light” of God’s Word. And yet at the same time she also claimed to be the expounder of the truths contained in God’s Word, stating that she was “enabled to define what is truth and what is error”. She claimed that there “never was a time” that God “instructed His people more earnestly” concerning His will – apparently not even through His prophets of old – yea, not any time in human history; than when God chose to speak through her! God instructs “line upon line, precept upon precept”, not in the Bible, but through the “Testimonies”. This is base and plain blasphemy. Not even the apostle Paul claimed as much of himself, but took a humble view even of his own gifts, and wrote instead that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” 1 Corinthians 14:32.

And so while Seventh-day Adventists claim to hold the Bible, and the Bible alone, as their sole rule of faith and authority in matters of doctrine, this is plainly not the case. It is the Bible *and something else*; it is the Bible *and the spirit of prophecy* that they hold in matters of faith and doctrine. But it is worse than this. In and of a truth, the Seventh-day Adventist church – and especially those die-hard and unapologetic proponents of Mrs. White’s prophetic gift to the church – go one step further, if not knowingly, then at least in practice, and that is this: they interpret the Bible *through the lens of the spirit of prophecy*! That is, they interpret the Bible *by Ellen White’s writings*. **And this is the secret to Adventism’s seductive power and bondage.** Take away the “spirit of prophecy”, and interpret the Bible by using it as its own expositor, and the whole house of cards comes crashing down. I know this from personal experience, for as I began to go back and read my Bible, and to allow it to plainly speak for itself; and as I understood the plain words of the author of the book of Hebrews clearly stating that Christ went “within the veil” to the “holiest of all” (Hebrews 6:19-10; 10:19-20) at His ascension, and not in 1844 as SDA’s claim, I was immediately accused by my former Adventist brethren of being a heretic, eternally lost, “gone off into darkness”, a child of the devil, etc., etc. – all because I rejected what Ellen White said, and instead chose to believe what the Bible plainly says about Jesus Christ being our Intercessor and Great High Priest before the presence and throne of God in heaven!

Quotes like the following were constantly pressed upon me by former friends of mine:

“Men may get up scheme after scheme, and the enemy will seek to seduce souls from the truth, but all who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in these last days.” – *Letter 50, 1906*.

“The enemy has made his masterly efforts to unsettle the faith of our own people in the Testimonies, and when these errors come in they claim to prove all the positions by the Bible, but they misinterpret the Scriptures....This is just as Satan designed it should be...They will claim Scripture as their evidence, and deceptions of Satan in every form will prevail.” – *Letter 109, 1890.*

“The testimonies I have borne you have in truth been presented to me by the Lord....It is not I whom you are betraying....It is the Lord, who has given me a message to bear to you.” – *Letter 66, 1897.*

“One thing is certain: Those Seventh-day Adventists who take their stand under Satan’s banner will first give up their faith in the warnings and reproofs contained in the Testimonies of God’s Spirit.” – *Letter 156, 1903.*

“For half a century I have been the Lord’s messenger...For sixty years I have been in communication with heavenly messengers, and I have been constantly learning in reference to divine things, and in reference to the way in which God is constantly working to bring souls from the error of their ways to the light in God’s light.” – *Letter 86, 1906.*

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God....Satan will work...to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.” – *Letter 12, 1890.*

“Not long ago I met Elder Ballenger...He was gathering together a mass of scriptures such as would confuse minds because of his assertions and his misapplication of these scriptures.” – *Manuscript Releases, 760, p.2.*

What I find most fascinating about these quotes is Ellen White’s denial of an individual’s liberty of conscience to use scripture to support their faith, and instead her constant appeal to herself and her writings as the ultimate doctrinal authority. “Believe in me and my writings, and you will be safe from the delusions of the last days!”, she says. Those who gather together a “mass of scriptures”, or who “claim Scripture as their evidence”, are only confusing minds and allowing the “deceptions of Satan in every form” to prevail! Amazing! Apparently believing in Mrs. White’s inspiration is safer than trusting in the Bible. And Seventh-day Adventists cannot see that this is a cult.

Again I repeat, because it bears repeating again and again until this point becomes crystal clear to the honest reader, ***that the secret to Seventh-day Adventist bondage is faith in Ellen White to be the sole, infallible interpreter of the Bible.*** But it is beyond bondage; *it is plain and simple heresy.* Although it is true that there are many sincere, true, and honest Christians in her midst, yet there is no true spirit of Protestantism in Seventh-day Adventism as a denomination; no liberty of soul to stand upon “the Bible, and the Bible alone”. One cannot truly be a Seventh-day Adventist and not believe in Ellen White as an inspired prophetess. Indeed, its maxims declare that all who do not have implicit faith in Mrs. White and her gift of prophecy will be lost and deceived – a child of the devil to stand under “Satan’s black banner”! It is no different than popery at its core, for the Pope makes no less claims than Sister White when he claims to be the voice of God on earth, and to be the sole divine interpreter of the oracles

of God! Although it pains me to say it, Seventh-day Adventism is a cult at its very core; the same as Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Mary Baker Eddyism, and every other cult that claims to have a modern-day, infallible, human interpreter of God's Word. But Adventism is different than those aforementioned cults, in that it gives a façade of upholding the Bible, and the Bible alone, when it does not truly believe this or practice it. Therefore, the other cults are in a sense more honest than Seventh-day Adventists, inasmuch as they are at least open and transparent in their belief that one must believe their prophets in order to truly be saved.

Set Free in Christ Jesus

The last independent SDA church I pastored was a small fellowship in North Idaho. It was started in 2015 with an Adventist friend of mine, but I only lasted around a year there before finally resigning in 2016. Dealing with fanaticism and constant doctrinal debates within Adventism had wearied me over the years and caused me to feel alone and isolated. During a sabbatical I had taken from pastoral work after leaving Oregon years before, I had become much more involved in traveling and speaking as a defender of the SDA faith, and was well known in many Adventist circles. But the feeling of disconnect with the SDA culture and bigoted mindset toward anything and everything "non-Adventist", had slowly worn on me. More and more I had begun to feel like "a man without a country", or like an island in the sea. No longer being an official member of the SDA denomination, and never truly fitting in to any of the "independent" camps either, I was feeling more and more isolated and without any true friends. It would only be a matter of time before I would leave for good.

To cope with this sense of lack of true purpose in the church, and to deal with the depression of spirits that was constantly pressing upon me, I decided to get involved in community and public service. In 2012, I joined a local fire department in Montana and began pursuing EMS credentials as a first responder. In 2013, I was licensed as an EMT and joined an ambulance service in addition to the fire department. I began to progress rapidly, advancing to an EMT with endorsements, on to an Advanced EMT, and then an EMT Lead Instructor for the State. In 2014, I went through Initial Attack Engine Academy with the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources Fire and Aviation program, becoming a certified wild land firefighter; and then joined the Incident Medical Specialist program through the US Forest Service. I served as a firefighter and line EMT on many national incidents, progressing up through the ranks to an Advanced Firefighter, then to an Engine Captain, a fire line Advanced EMT, then to a Medical Unit Leader for the Phoenix National Incident Management Organization (NIMO). I joined at least three other fire departments over the years, continuing to progress in qualifications also as a structure firefighter, and then became the Training Officer for another ambulance company in Montana, as well as its interim president. I became dually licensed as an AEMT in Montana and Washington, and then eventually moved our family to Alaska where we now reside, and where I also became the EMS Captain for a local fire department; as well as an Engine Captain, helicopter crewmember, Heavy Equipment Boss, Class B sawyer, Strike Team Leader, and an Incident Commander for fire operations with the Alaska Division of Forestry. I suppose I had finally found a niche where I could work and function without the fakery and pretensions of Adventists around me, constantly pressing their opinions and whatever crazy notions they had come up with

from their latest reading of the “spirit of prophecy”. It was a way of escape where I could have the clear conscience of actually doing something to practically help my community, state, and country – while also being a Christian witness to my co-workers and associates – whereas, it seemed that so many Adventists had lost this focus of outreach to the lost, and instead spent their time arguing amongst themselves as to who the purer Adventists were, with the stricter interpretation of SDA doctrine and more loyalty to Ellen White. I had just grown tired of it all, and embittered over the years by the constant gossip and back-biting among church members.

In 2016, after resigning from my last independent SDA church, I threw myself back into the fire and EMS services as a way of escape. Our family tried fellowshipping in local SDA churches but never really felt like we fit in. Invariably the subject would be brought up by the pastor or others asking where we were from and where our church membership was. Once it was discovered that we had withdrawn our membership years before, we were often times given the cold shoulder and made to feel unwelcome. We began to almost exclusively home-church, sometimes finding fellowship with other people, and making friends with non-Adventists. During this time, we were befriended by the local Mennonite community and found them to be sincere and honest people. Moving from Idaho back to Montana, we even rented a house temporarily on a Mennonite pastor’s farm, and attended their church services from time-to-time, or participated in their sing-a-longs. Although we still remained loyal Sabbath-keepers, we were beginning to discover that God had his sincere followers also in other denominations who loved and worshipped Christ with all their hearts. The narrow-minded bigotry of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines became more and more clear as we met other Christians from other denominations who were warm and friendly people – something we had experienced was sorely lacking in Adventism.

Fundamental SDA doctrine teaches that after October 22, 1844, all other Christian churches became a part of “Babylon”, and that salvation cannot be found in their midst. [32] Furthermore, Ellen White – through a supposed “inspired vision” – stated that, after 1844, it was Satan that answered the prayers of Christians in these other denominations! [33] And yet here we were meeting Christians of all stripes that loved Jesus, that lived out their faith, that were helpful and kind, and who were true neighbors in time of need. Steadily, a disdain and disconnect was growing in our hearts over Ellen White’s counsel, and we could not help but to wonder whether the close-mindedness, coldness, fanaticism, and bigotry we had experienced over the years in various SDA circles was not directly due to her writings. But as of yet, we had not even considered leaving Adventism since our souls were bound to the doctrines which we believed were true. And, surprisingly enough, we still believed that Ellen White was a prophet, and that to leave Adventism would spell our doom. I did not understand it then, but it was a form of mind control.

In 2019, our family moved to Alaska, and it was our first spring here that God finally began to open my eyes to the truth of the gospel, to Adventism, and to Ellen White. The process whereby this took place is as follows:

The Truth of the Atonement

Recognizing our need as a family to find Christian fellowship with others, I began researching options of church membership within Adventism. It was while researching membership in the “Free SDA” church (an independent association of autonomous

historic SDA churches), that I discovered that A.T. Jones – a former associate of James and Ellen White, and a prominent Church historian, author, and teacher in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s who had left the SDA denomination over some disagreements he had with Mrs. White and the Church leadership at that time – had become a member of the People’s Church (an independent black congregation which had broken away from the SDA denomination), and had remained loyal to the historic Seventh-day Adventist doctrines as a Sabbath-keeper until the day of his death. [34] What was most disturbing about this revelation was the fact that I had been taught that Jones was lost once he had left the church since he had rejected Ellen White. In fact, Mrs. White had written the following plain testimonies against him in 1907 and 1908, resulting in the SDA Church revoking his ministerial credentials and later his church membership:

“I must warn our people against laboring in any line in connection with A. T. Jones. He is one who has departed from the faith, and has given heed to seducing spirits. He knows not what manner of spirit he is of.” – *Letter 330, 1908*

“A. T. Jones, Dr. Kellogg, and Elder Tenney are all working under the same leadership. They are classing themselves with those of whom the apostle writes, ‘Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.’ In the case of A. T. Jones I can see the fulfillment of the warnings that were given me regarding him.” – *Letter 306, 1907.*

“I want to say to you, Brother and Sister Starr, that the time we have so long anticipated has come. A. T. Jones has come to the place where he voices the mind and faith of Dr. Kellogg. They have now taken a decided stand against the truth, and special efforts will be made to lead souls away. This apostasy has cost us dearly....Warning after warning has been given to these men, but they have set themselves first to deny the messages, and then to declare that they did not believe the testimonies. Their work against the truth has been as marked by deception as was the course of Canright. Many whose sympathies were with Dr. Kellogg have united with him, and have departed from the faith.” – *Letter 316, 1907.*

And yet, in spite of these “testimonies” that A.T. Jones had “departed from the faith”, history shows plainly that he continued to be loyal and faithful to Adventist doctrines and to keep the Sabbath until the day of his death. In other words, Ellen White’s warnings and rebukes were baseless. And it was the same with all of her chastisements against her own people. Her warnings and rebukes were used as scare tactics in an attempt to protect her own prophetic authority. In the vast majority of her “inspired testimonies” against men who resisted her authoritarian status as the “messenger of the Lord” – warning them against “going into darkness” and joining Satan’s ranks – the plain facts of history prove that the majority of those who rejected her as a prophet remained loyal to the Christian faith, and in many cases continued to keep the Sabbath.

It was while researching these facts surrounding A.T. Jones that I discovered a letter he wrote to Mrs. White, where he presented facts and questions showing that it was impossible for her to have a true prophetic gift. Although she promised to answer his questions about her supposed gift of prophecy, this letter was never answered. [35] W.S. Sadler, a physician at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, also wrote her a similar letter, again with a promise from her to respond. This letter was also left unanswered. [36]

Of course this all raised numerous questions in my mind. If Ellen White was truly inspired as a prophet, why did she not do what God told her would be done which was to answer their questions clearly and plainly? Was this all just a grand deception? I still feared to truly give voice to my questions and serious concerns, since at this point I still did believe her testimonies that I would be lost if I rejected her writings.

One other point which bears mentioning, is that I had been invited to speak at a ministry called “Amazing Discoveries” – an internationally recognized SDA ministry – for two weeks of television recordings, scheduled for the fall of 2019 and spring of 2020. The topic was to be early Seventh-day Adventist history (specifically Millerite history), and the development of early pivotal SDA doctrines. Because of this commitment, I had begun an intensive study and re-examination of the pillar doctrines of Adventism, including the 2300 days, cleansing of the sanctuary, and investigative judgment which I planned to present. I was very familiar with these doctrines, having both lectured and defended them publicly in many venues, both in and out of the church. I had some questions regarding the context of Daniel chapter 8 which I wanted to understand more thoroughly in order to defend it clearly. I understood that these study series were going to be recorded and broadcast around the world; therefore, I desired to present a coherent and thorough answer to any objections that might be raised by theologian or lay person against my doctrinal lectures. Little did I know that I was now in the process of studying my way out of the Seventh-day Adventist faith!

In studying the topic of the “cleansing of the sanctuary” (Daniel 8:14), I had been taught (and I believed) that this scripture referred to the Old Testament Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) where the earthly tabernacle, or sanctuary, was cleansed from the sins of the people which had formerly been confessed throughout the year. I had been taught (but never conclusively shown from scripture) that sins were transferred through the blood of the sacrifice to the holy place, where it there lay stored up in figure until the 10th day of the 7th month when full and final atonement would then be made, and then all sin laid on the scapegoat which was led out into the wilderness to perish. The scapegoat, I had also been taught, represented Satan, the originator of sin, who would bare the guilt and punishment of all sins that were confessed; while unconfessed sins were placed back upon the sinner who was to be taken out of the camp and stoned.

The problem with this theory, however, was that most of it could not be proven by scripture alone. Nowhere does the Bible teach that sin is transferred in figure through the blood of a sacrifice; but rather, it is the blood of the sacrificial offering that purges sin (Hebrews 9:22). Nowhere does the Bible teach that Satan bears our sins, or that he dies for the sins which he caused others to commit; but rather, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4; 20, 24, 26), and it is Jesus who is the Sin-bearer and not Satan (Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21)! And nowhere does the Bible teach a so-called “investigative judgment” in 1844. I had been in the habit of using the writings of Ellen White and the early SDA pioneers as my research backbone in order to prove many of my theological points. And so as I continued to study, I found myself in a dilemma: how do I prove these points using the Bible alone?

This led me into a further study of the New Testament book of Hebrews, a book I had often used over the years in order to prove that there had to be a cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary with the blood of Jesus which was better than the blood of bulls and goats (see Hebrews 9:19-24). As I prayerfully studied Hebrews I came across two passages

that I had read many times before, but this time my attention was arrested as I studied them within the wider context of the overall message of Hebrews:

*“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that **within the veil**; wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” – Hebrews 6:19-20.*

*“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, **through the veil**, that is to say, his flesh.” – Hebrews 10:19-20.*

The Bible was clear that **Jesus went “within the veil”, “into the holiest” – that is, into the most holy place – at His ascension to heaven in 31 AD, there to minister His blood in atonement for our sins, and not in 1844.** And this also agreed with the apostle Paul’s affirmative statement that:

*“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have **NOW received the atonement.**” – Romans 5:11.*

Not a word in the New Testament of a future atonement in 1844. No, the atonement was completed at the cross when Jesus shed His precious blood to make full satisfaction for the broken Law, and thus brought man back into reconciliation with God! This point led me to write out a study in essay form entitled, *“Within the Veil”*, which can be downloaded from our website.

As I began to understand this truth for the first time, I was almost in unbelief. I began texting an SDA pastor friend of mine to ask him questions privately on this point to see if he could perhaps shed some light on this. But by now huge questions began rising in my mind over Ellen White’s inspiration since this doctrine was mainly advocated by her writings – being “confirmed” in vision – while the Bible seemed to be saying something else entirely. This led to me researching whether Mrs. White had condemned other people wrongly for leaving the church over this doctrine, and whether her prediction that people would “stand under Satan’s banner” for rejecting her as a prophet was true. I soon learned about A.F. Ballenger and his excommunication from the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the early 1900’s over his views on the sanctuary [37], and that he remained a faithful Sabbath keeper – joining the Seventh Day Baptists – until the day of his death. Again, this was proof to me that her testimonies of people being lost for rejecting her as a prophet were false. I found Ballenger’s book, *“Cast out for the Cross of Christ”*, online and read it. And lo-and-behold, he had come to nearly the same conclusions as myself on Christ going to the most holy place, “within the veil”, at His ascension to heaven!

The blinders began to fall off little-by-little as I realized that Ellen White was either entirely self-deceived regarding her claim to prophetic office, or just plain lying. I wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt since she had written so many beautiful books that had greatly blessed my life over the years. But, sadly, as I continued to do research on the topic of people who had left the church and why, I learned more and more of the serious problems with Ellen White’s claims, as well as accusations of plagiarism. I had heard these claims before whispered over the years as a pastor, but never seriously investigated them,

believing them all to be of the devil and calculated to shake my faith in the “true testimony” which would cause me to be lost in hell. But I was now at the point of being open to inquiry and willing to hear both sides of the matter.

I next came across D.M. Canright’s book, *“Life of Mrs. E.G. White, Her Claims Refuted”*, where he unequivocally and irrefutably proves that James and Ellen White changed her earlier visions on the “shut door” to later teach something entirely different. [38] The honest truth is that this book is so utterly convincing in its presentation of evidence and facts regarding Ellen White’s false claims to prophecy, that it is still giving problems to the SDA church 100 years later. In this book, Canright also takes up the charges of plagiarism against Mrs. White, a claim which (as mentioned before earlier in this essay) even secular authorities were aware of in her day. A newspaper, the Healdsburg Enterprise, even published a detailed story in 1889 revealing to the public at large the problems with Mrs. White’s writings, and blatantly accused her of “literary theft”. [39]

The Truth of the Judgment

The doctrine of an “investigative judgment” for the righteous commencing in 1844 is entirely unbiblical. These claims are based on a sloppy exegesis of Daniel chapters 7 and 8 which, if read in their context, point to a judgment on the little horn power and a vindication of God’s people. The Bible is clear that God blots out sin – brings it “no more to remembrance” – when He pardons the sinner. See Hebrews 8:10-12; 10:1-18; Ezekiel 18:21-22; Micah 7:18-19; Romans 3:24-25.

It is because the Adventist pioneers never understood this that they confused what actually happened at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14. Instead of recognizing that Christ entered the most holy place at His ascension to minister His shed blood in behalf of sinners - and that in 1844 the truth of His atonement would be “vindicated” (for this is the proper translation of the word used in Daniel 8:14) after the casting down of the truth by the papacy for 1260 years and the little horn obscuring this high priestly work of Christ by replacing His work of atonement with a false system of earthly priests, confession, and the weekly sacrifice of Mass - the pioneers instead taught that forgiveness of sin was actually *ended* for the world in 1844, and the door of mercy forever shut! Even Ellen White herself taught this error for 7 years after 1844. In fact, Mrs. White taught her people not even to pray for sinners after 1844! She would later change her mind in 1851 and conveniently have new “visions” to then establish what she taught. The following are just a few of her quotes that were later altered and hidden away by her husband James, her son Willie, and then by the church at large:

“It was just as impossible for them [those who gave up their faith in the 1844 movement] to get on the path again and go to the city, AS ALL THE WICKED WORLD WHICH GOD HAD REJECTED. They fell all along the path, one after another.” - *Word to the Little Flock, page 14, 1847.*

“Then I saw that Jesus prayed for his enemies; but that should not cause US or lead US to pray for THE WICKED WORLD, WHOM GOD HAD REJECTED. When he prayed for his enemies, there was hope for them, and they COULD BE BENEFITED AND SAVED BY HIS PRAYERS, and also after he was a mediator, in the outer apartment for the whole

world; BUT NOW HIS SPIRIT AND SYMPATHY WERE WITHDRAWN FROM THE WORLD; AND OUR SYMPATHY MUST BE WITH JESUS, AND MUST BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE UNGODLY...I saw that the wicked could not be benefited by our prayers now." - *Vision in Camden, NY, June 29, 1851.*

To further prove this point, that Ellen White and the early pioneers believed in a shut door and close of probation on the world in 1844, I submit the following statements. The first is what Ellen White said of those who professed to be converted to Christ after 1844 (again, it must be remembered that she did not believe anyone could be saved after 1844, and she continued to hold this belief for many years even though she claimed to be a prophet of God):

"I saw that the mysterious signs and wonders and false reformations would increase and spread. The reformations that were shown me were not reformations from error to truth, but from bad to worse; for those who professed a change of heart had only wrapped about them a religious garb, which covered up the iniquity of a wicked heart. Some appeared to have been really converted, so as to deceive God's people; but if their hearts could be seen, they would appear as black as ever. *My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners, as used to be. I looked, but could not see it, for the time for their salvation was past.*" - *The Present Truth, pages 21-24, August, 1849.*

"I became acquainted with James White and Ellen Harmon (now Mrs. White) early in 1845. . . Ellen was having what was called visions: said that God had shown her in vision that Jesus Christ arose and on the tenth day of the seventh month, 1844, shut the door of mercy; had left forever the mediatorial throne; the whole world was doomed and lost; and there never could be another sinner saved". - (*"The True Sabbath," p. 72*), *Testimony signed by L.S. Burdick, San Francisco, CA.*

"Our views of the work before us were then mostly vague and indefinite, some still retaining the idea adopted by the body of Advent believers in 1844, with Wm. Miller at their head, that our work for the world was finished, and that the message was confined to those of the original Advent faith. So firmly was this believed that one of our number was nearly refused the message, the individual presenting it having doubts of the possibility of his salvation, because he was not in the '44 move." - *Review and Herald, June 11, 1861. Signed by 9 SDA ministers.*

"I think we shall clearly see that there can be no other place for the shut door but at the autumn of 1844. . . When we came up to that point of time all our sympathy, burden and prayers for sinners ceased; and the unanimous feeling and testimony was that our work for the world was finished forever. . . The reason that the living branches felt that their work was done, was because the twenty-three hundred days were ended, and the time had come for Jesus to shut the door of the Holy and pass into the Most Holy to receive the kingdom and cleanse the sanctuary. . . At this very time when the faithful servant is giving meat to the 'household' [not to the unbelieving world], and is opposed by the evil servant, and when the Advent history marked out by the parable is fulfilled, and the shut door in the past, . . . He is still merciful to his saints and ever will be; and Jesus is still their Advocate and Priest. But the sinner, to whom Jesus had stretched out his arms all the day

long, and who had rejected the offer of salvation, was left without an advocate when Jesus passed from the Holy Place and shut the door in 1844. The professed church who rejected the truth was also rejected, smitten with blindness, and now with their flocks and herds they go to seek the Lord, as still an advocate for sinners. But, says the prophet (Hos. 5:6, 7): "They shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, for they have begotten strange children." - *James White, Present Truth, May, 1850*

The fact that the pioneers believed this error and later corrected it is one thing, for our understanding of Bible doctrine is often times progressive; but the fact that Ellen White supported this error and claimed to have also seen it in vision is another thing altogether, for this casts doubts on her claims to divine inspiration and to status as a prophet or mouthpiece for God. Remember what the Bible teaches in this regard:

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:21-22.

I choose as a Christian to believe the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible is my foundation, not the writings of fallible men and women.

Our Ultimate Authority in Matters of Faith, Practice and Doctrine

The following quotes, taken from various statements of faith, show both the Baptist (or earliest Christian) position on the Bible, as well as the Protestant Reformers' stand on "sola scriptura":

"The Bible is our only authority for faith and practice. No insight, testimony, or decree of man, regardless of his piety or position, can ever supersede the Bible. This distinctive is the primary Baptist distinctive. All others spring from this absolute trust in the Scriptures." [40]

"We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration by God of the original manuscripts of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and that they are inerrant and infallible in all matters." [41]

"We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men supernaturally inspired; that it has truth without any admixture of error for its matter; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the age, the only complete and final revelation of the will of God to man; the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried." [42]

"We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God; furthermore, we believe that the Holy Scriptures, as originally written, do not only contain and convey the Word of God, but is the very Word of God. The Holy Scriptures are inerrant, infallible and God-breathed and, therefore, are

the final authority for faith and life. The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are the complete and divine revelation of God to man. We believe the Holy Scriptures should be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning.” [43]

“*Sola Scriptura*, (Latin ablative, *sōlā scrīptūrā*, meaning ‘by Scripture alone’), is upheld by Lutheran and Reformed theologies and asserts that scripture must govern over church traditions and interpretations which are themselves held to be subject to scripture. All church traditions, creeds, and teachings must be in unity with the teachings of scripture as the divinely inspired Word of God.

“*Sola Scriptura* asserts that the Bible can and is to be interpreted through itself, with one area of Scripture being useful for interpreting others. This principle is largely based on 2 Timothy 3:16, which says, ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.’ That scripture can interpret itself is a means by which to show the unity of Scripture as a whole. As all doctrines are formed via scriptural understandings, all doctrines must be found to align with Scripture and as such are then subject to scripture before the believer can begin to apply them.

“This particular sola is sometimes called the formal principle of the Reformation, since it is the source and norm of the material cause or principle, the gospel of Jesus Christ that is received *sola fide* (Latin ablative, *sōlā fidē*, meaning ‘by faith alone’), *sola gratia* (Latin ablative, *sōlā grātiā*, meaning ‘by grace alone’ or by God’s favor). The adjective (*sola*) and the noun (*scriptura*) are in the ablative case rather than in the nominative case to indicate that the Bible does not stand alone apart from God, but rather that it is the instrument of God by which he reveals himself for salvation through faith in Christ (*solus Christus* or *solo Christo*).” [44]

Thus, the “Five Solas” of the Reformation:

1. *Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone*
2. *Sola Fide – By Faith alone*
3. *Sola Gratia – By Grace alone*
4. *Solus Christus – Through Christ alone*
5. *Soli Deo Gloria – Glory to God alone*

Conclusion

Dear reader, I have written these things in only a few words. It is a personal testimony of how God led me out of darkness into His marvelous light, not once, but twice. I had many good experiences, too, while I was a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church and engaged in service for a cause I once loved. We still have many dear friends in that church who are sincere and honest souls, and who are serving the Lord to the best of their ability. I believe that God loves the Adventist people and desires to draw them closer to Himself. But I came to a point in my personal Christian walk and experience where I could no longer conscientiously sustain several key doctrinal positions from the Bible, nor

could I any longer support the writings and claims of Mrs. White, and I had to finally make my break with the SDA faith.

It is my hope and prayer that, through this written testimony, others may be brought out of the bondage of Seventh-day Adventism, its false doctrines, and its false prophet, and be thus led into the full light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of the atonement which Christ accomplished on the Cross of Calvary. May the Spirit of truth open the eyes of the understanding of the Adventist people, and may the merciful God of heaven remove the veil from the eyes of the honest in heart, in order to receive the glorious gospel of Christ and experience its sanctifying power.

May God bless each of you, and guide you into the truths of His holy Word (John 16:13; 17:17).

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” – John 17:17.

[1]. https://szu.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/28_Beliefs.pdf

[2]. <https://spectrummagazine.org/article/2017/01/05/great-controversy-over-plagiary-last-interview-walter-rea>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1980/11/07/seventh-day-adventist-prophet-white-is-called-plagiarist/c7bf9005-37d7-48b1-acbb-18db444e376d/>

<https://www.nonsda.org/egw/plagiarism.html>

[3]. <http://www.bible.ca/7-Seventh-day-Adventism-RENOUNCED-by-D-M-Canright.htm>

https://archive.org/stream/LudwigR.ConradiFOUNDERSofTheSeventhDayAdventistDenomination1939/Conradi_foundersOfTheSdaDenomination_1939_djvu.txt

[4]. https://szu.adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/28_Beliefs.pdf

[5]. <http://www.7thdaynotsunday.org.nz/PDFs/Luther%20on%20Antichrist.pdf>

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc24/cc24007.htm>

[6]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_mortalism

<https://www.jba.gr/The-origins-of-the-doctrine-of-the-immortality-of-the-soul.htm>

[7]. <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-scripsda-html/>

<https://www.adventistresearch.org/blog/2017/11/writings-ellen-g-white>

[8]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Investigative_judgment

<http://www.end-times-prophecy.org/atonement-cross.html>

<https://atoday.org/7-important-questions-about-1844/>

[9]. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/06/us/7th-day-adventists-face-change-and-dissent.html>

<http://www.bible.ca/7-white-inspired-100-pastors-fired.htm>

[10]. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/1343.2>

<http://www.adventistonline.com/forum/topics/unto-2300-daysdaniel-814>

[11]. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/william-miller.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Disappointment

[12]. https://books.google.com/books?id=aN_vI7qkuoC&pg=PA326&lpg=PA326&dq=adventists+set+dates+lords+coming+after+1844&source=bl&ots=zgoeJKY9ky&sig=ACfU3U2iQ-VxRIX2OOKporyYJ3iHYSfoVA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj9vvLb9PflAhVMrJ4KH TicDUgQ6AEwDHoECA8QAQ#v=onepage&q=adventists%20set%20dates%20lords%20coming%20after%201844&f=false

[13]. <http://www.blackdahistory.org/william-foy-collection.html>

<http://www.sdadefend.com/Our%20Firm%20Foundation/W-E-Foy.htm>

[14]. <http://everythingimportant.org/WilliamMiller/>

[15]. <https://www.lineagejourney.com/the-journey-continues/hiram-edson-the-farmer-in-the-cornfield/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiram_Edson

[16]. <https://www.lineagejourney.com/the-journey-continues/two-dreams-and-a-lot-of-spunk-the-adventures-of-joseph-bates/>

[17]. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/105.57>

[18]. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/19.250>

[19]. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/1635.2>

[20]. <https://www.gospeloutreach.net/DOAtone.html>

<http://www.cgsf.org/dbeattie/calendar/?roman=1844>

[21]. <https://www.aplib.org/files/lwf/LWfV3N2.pdf>

[22]. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/132.2168>

<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/746.6>

[23]. <https://actheologian.com/2016/02/21/the-shut-door/>

<http://www.presenttruthmag.com/7dayadventist/1844/7.html>

[24]. <http://www.bible.ca/7-Seventh-day-Adventism-RENOUNCED-by-D-M-Canright.htm>

[25]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Disappointment

[26]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity_of_the_Seventh-day_Adventist_Church

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/SDAOS1991.pdf>

<https://www.adventist.org/en/world-church/>

[27]. https://www.nadadventist.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/SDAAM_Jan2011Final.pdf

[28]. <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/-/use-of-tithe/>

<https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2007-06-11/how-is-your-tithe-used-church-commission-examining-use-of-contributions/>

<https://thecompassmagazine.com/blog/the-tithe-conundrum-how-the-adventist-church-uses-tithe>

[29]. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=dissertations>

<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fResources%2f1919BC&FolderCTID=0x01200095DE8DF0FA49904B9D652113284DE0C8000B5857BEC3C5DB4F96C32A1C24765988>

[30]. <https://www.nonegw.org/lifeofpaul.shtml>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=VOs7DwAAQBAJ&pg=PA119&lpg=PA119&dq=ske+ches+from+life+paul+conybeare+howson+plagiarized&source=bl&ots=wfg8hMRNku&sig=ACfU3U1hXfpr5bmTJefr7Teo-mNzDmzw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjvz4a->

[nflAhX2JzQIHYLWA4sQ6AEwBnoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=sketches%20from%20life%20paul%20conybeare%20howson%20plagiarized&f=false](https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/756.3111)
<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/756.3111>

[31]. <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1991/08/abortion-history-of-adventist-guidelines>

<https://gleanernow.com/news/2018/06/adventists-and-abortion>

[32]. <https://www.adventistreview.org/1811-28>

<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/132.1704>

<https://www.lansingadventist.org/about/the-three-angels-messages/the-first-angels-message/the-second-angels-message>

[33]. <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-shut-alw-html/>

[34]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alonzo_T._Jones

<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/694.18>

[35]. http://www.truthorfables.com/AT_Jones_to_EGW.htm

[36]. http://www.truthorfables.com/WS_Sadler_To_EGW.htm

[37]. <https://archive.org/details/BallengerA.F.CastOutForTheCrossOfChrist1909>

[38]. <https://www.nonegw.org/canright/egw16.htm>

[39]. <https://www.nonsda.org/egw/egw77.shtml>

[40]. <http://www.biblebaptistchurchjacksonheights.com/baptist-distinctives>

[41]. <https://www.faiith.edu/about-faiith/what-we-believe/>

[42]. <https://www.bbfi.org/articles-of-faiith>

[43]. <https://baptistcmn.org/Statement-of-Faiith>

[44]. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_solae