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## The Investigative Judgment of Seventh-day Adventism Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church a Cult?

by J. Greg Sheryl

Disappointment is a bitter pill to swallow. When it is too painful to accept, a person might enter a state of denial, refusing to believe that the disappointment has occurred. With God's help, the person *can* face reality and move on. But not everyone moves on.

Seventh-day Adventism grew out of an event called the "Great Disappointment," which happened after William Miller, an American 19th-century Baptist preacher, predicted the Second Coming of Christ, first in 1843, and then again in 1844.<sup>1</sup> Miller based his dates on his understanding of Daniel 8:14 and 9:24-27.<sup>2</sup>

Adherents to Millerism were estimated to have ranged from 30,000 to 100,000.<sup>3</sup> Members of various main-line denominations were part of the Millerite movement.

When Christ did not return on the second predicted date (Oct. 22, 1844),

Miller's followers were disappointed and disillusioned. One Millerite, Hiram Edson, wrote:

"Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn."<sup>4</sup>

Miller himself declined to set any further dates for the Second Advent. He died a few years later. However, some followers struggled to understand what went wrong. Some returned to their former churches. Others formed new denominations, none of which grew and flourished as much as the Seventh-day Adventist church.

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# Editorials

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## THE HARBINGER: THE CAHNING OF THE CHURCH

With the release of *The Harbinger*, the Church is abuzz as it was over *The Prayer of Jabez*, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, *The Shack*, *The DaVinci Code*, and books about visits to heaven. Like the Athenians in Paul's day, many within the Church are waiting for the latest fad and it is here.

*The Harbinger* was written by Jonathan Cahn, a Messianic "Rabbi" from Wayne, N.J. Little is known about him; descriptions range from inspired prophet to struggling exegete.

The media blitz began in *Charisma* magazine. The book is published by FrontLine Publishers, a division of *Charisma*. However, *Charisma* is not alone in promoting the book. Others including World Net Daily, Pat Robertson, and Sid Roth have jumped on the bandwagon. It has been endorsed by Roman Catholic-turned-Mormon Glenn Beck.

The book is written as a novel, but claims to be based on truth, prophecy, and Scripture. With all this publicity, Cahn has hit a grand slam. It is a case of book sales driven by sensationalism and purported secrets and mysteries only now made clear. However, the discerning Christian must look at it from the standpoint of biblical truth and proper hermeneutics.

Cahn's approach is summed up on the very first line of the first page of the book where he writes of "An ancient

mystery that holds the secret of America's future." Cahn's character, Nouriel Kaplan, assures us that America's future hangs on the secret and, "it's *not* fiction — it's real," he tells his readers (pg. 2). For the price of the book, you too can find out this long-hidden mystery.

Cahn's claims are based on what he thinks he has found in Isaiah 9. Cahn's main proposition is that Isaiah 9:10-21 is being fulfilled in America, beginning with the fall of the Twin Towers on Sept. 11, 2001. The events surrounding 9/11 are a warning, particularly to the United States.

This works for Cahn because he thinks he has found some superficial and strained parallels to 9/11 in a few of the words in Isaiah 9. He emphasizes Isaiah 9:10 and the phrase "The bricks have fallen down."

When the Twin Towers fell, no bricks fell. The Twin Towers were made of steel, aluminum, glass, and cement. What really topples is Cahn's interpretation of Isaiah 9:10.

Any student of hermeneutics knows who Isaiah's intended audience was. The context makes it clear that Isaiah 9 is addressed to Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Israel is called "Jacob" in verse 8, which says judgment "has fallen on Israel." In verse 14, "Israel" is again mentioned.

Isaiah 9:10-21 is a prophecy of the Assyrian invasion and destruction of the many mud-brick houses in the Northern Kingdom that would be destroyed. This was all

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# News Updates

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## WATCHTOWER BEGINS ITS EXODUS FROM BROOKLYN

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has announced it will sell its 34 properties in Brooklyn, N.Y., and that it plans to move its headquarters from there to Warwick, in upstate N.Y. The prime real estate includes 13 buildings that are in manufacturing zones, 17 residential buildings, and four parking lots. The combined value of all 34 properties is estimated at more than \$1 billion.

The Jehovah's Witness organization has been a fixture in Brooklyn for more than a century. It moved its headquarters there from Allegheny, Pa., in 1909. Since that time, the religious organization has been slowly and regularly purchasing property in the Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO area. DUMBO stands for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass and encompasses land between the Brooklyn Bridge and Vinegar Hill area.

An early indication of the Watchtower's relocation plan came over a year ago when it placed eight of its properties on the market. By late winter 2012, four of the available buildings had sold, netting the organization nearly \$21 million. According to a WABC-TV news report, "The move upstate has been under consideration for some time. Seven years ago, they moved their printing operations up to Wallkill to print [the] Awake and Watchtower [magazines]."

The Watchtower's plan to sell its Brooklyn real estate has been welcomed with great delight by area residents. For many years, those living in nearby neighborhoods fought losing battles against the organization's expansion and development. Residents have long argued that the Watchtower's presence in the community never generated jobs, never strengthened the local economy, and never attracted commerce to the area. And, as a tax-exempt religious organization, it did not contribute to the tax base.

All of that may soon change. One online business report accented the prospect with the headline: "Hallelujah! Jehovah's Witnesses' land sell-off has Brooklyn dreaming big." The news article said that "The move could net City Hall millions of dollars a year in revenue."

Despite the negative factors and unfavorable association, not every resident will be happy to see the Jehovah's Witnesses move out of the area. They have been described as "good neighbors" and have been applauded for the "meticulous upkeep" of their properties. One person who hired a Jehovah's Witness to paint

her house said, "many people in the [Brooklyn] Heights take advantage of their skilled workforce, their carpenters, stonemasons and plumbers."

—MKG

## TBN'S FAMILY FEUD ESCALATES

The "O.C. Watchdog," the *The Orange County Register's* investigative arm, has published a series of articles to champion the mission of Brittany Koper — even if some try to discount it as just a family feud. In actuality, it may be more of a David vs. Goliath with the battling pair being blood relatives.

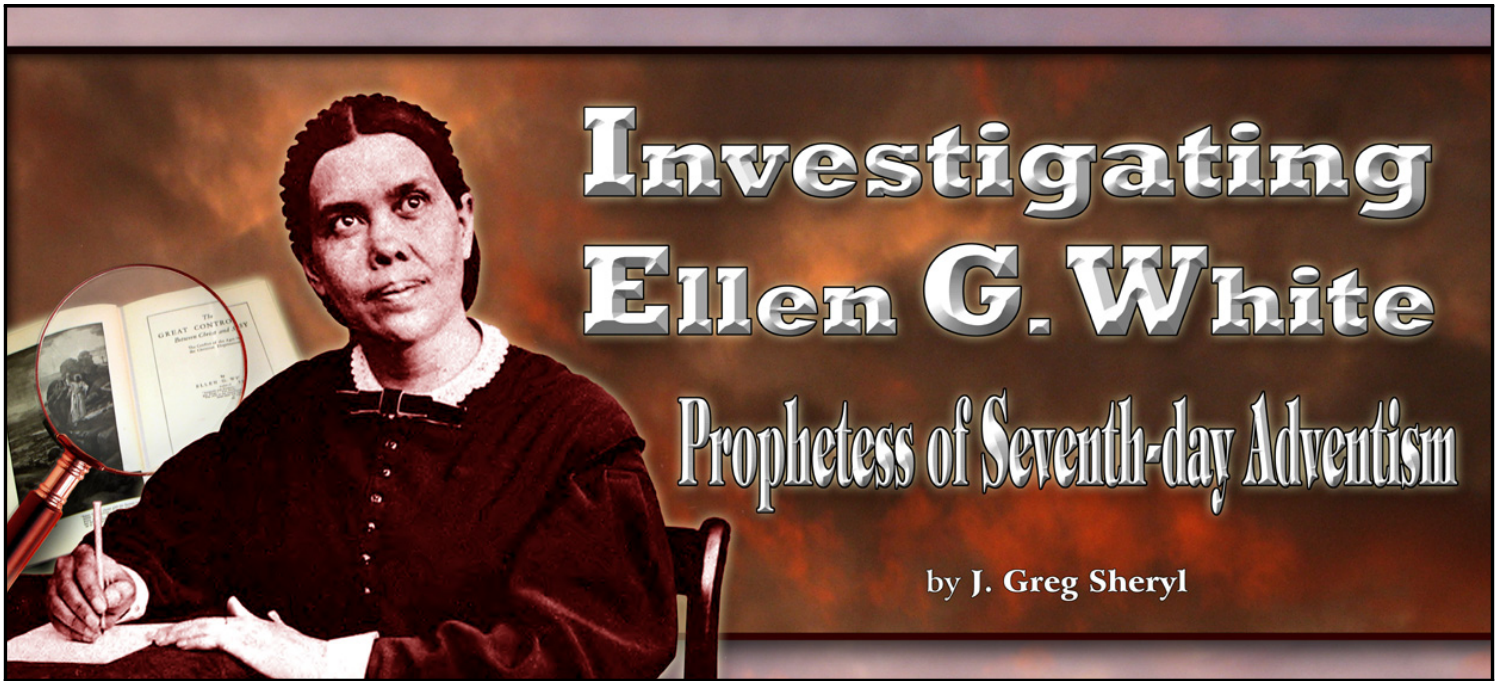
Koper is the granddaughter of Paul and Jan Crouch, co-founders of the Trinity Broadcasting Network. The Crouches began TBN in 1973 and have grown it into a Christian television empire worth nearly \$1 billion, bringing in approximately \$200 million annually. But now that empire is under serious attack with Koper trying to pull the lynchpin and make the wheels come off TBN's golden chariot.

Koper started working for TBN in 2007 in its personnel department. In July 2011 she became the organization's financial director. Her attempts to reform the spending habits of the network's hierarchy, including "the free-spending ways of her uncle Matthew Crouch and his wife, Laurie," were rebuffed by family members. In response to the allegations, Matthew Crouch told Koper's husband, Michael, that he would "destroy" them and then two months later she found herself fired, leading to intense family and legal feuds.

Specific word of TBN's financial improprieties became public by way of a lawsuit filed against the network. In a 180-page declaration filed in Orange County Superior Court, Koper said, "It is an understatement to say that I encountered tremendous resistance, particularly by TBN directors — and most particularly by my uncle, director Matthew Crouch, who I believed was guilty of the most glaring and dangerous violations of law concerning excess benefit transactions, kickbacks, self-dealing, and outright fraudulent conduct."

Koper maintains that Matthew's Gener8Xion film company has received \$50 million in TBN funds during the past decade, including \$1.2 million "related to the non-existent 3D Jesus movie." She also said that, "TBN was not reporting director Matthew Crouch's income on

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by J. Greg Sheryl

Seventh-day Adventism could be called the “Church of Ellen White.” Seventh-day Adventism arguably would not and could not exist without her.

Seventh-day Adventist historian, George R. Knight, wrote:

“Ellen G. White (1827-1915) has undoubtedly been the most influential Seventh-day Adventist in the history of the [Adventist] church. Her personal presence and her writings did much to shape and guide Adventism during her seven decades of prophetic ministry. Since her death in 1915 her counsel and insights have continued to direct the denomination.”<sup>1</sup>

Regarded by Seventh-day Adventism as a prophet of God, White is a forerunner of the Charismatic movement. She was also a founder and leader of the Adventist church, a speaker, and a prolific author.<sup>2</sup> One authoritative Adventist source stated:

“The material that she wrote fills more than eighty books, 200 tracts and pamphlets, and 4,600 periodical articles. Sermons, diaries, special testimonies, and letters comprise another 60,000 pages of manuscript materials.”<sup>3</sup>

This same source states that “*Steps to Christ* [is] her most widely distributed book,”<sup>4</sup> and that it “has been translated into more than 100 languages and has sold more than fifteen million copies.”<sup>5</sup> Further:

“Her greatest work is the well-received five-volume Conflict of the Ages Series, which details the great controversy<sup>6</sup> between Christ and Satan from the origin of sin until its eradication from the universe.”<sup>7</sup>

The final volume in that series is titled *The Great Controversy*.

#### FACTS ABOUT ELLEN G. WHITE

Born Ellen Gould Harmon in 1827, she became Ellen G. White when she married fellow Adventist believer James White in 1846. Although born in Gorham, Maine, she grew up in Portland, Maine. Her parents were members of a Methodist church.

Of her early years, Knight wrote:

“It was in Portland that 9-year-old Ellen experienced an accident that deeply affected her life. Hit in the face by a rock thrown by a classmate, she hovered near death for several weeks. Eventually she recovered, but the expe-

rience left her in such poor health that she was unable to continue her formal schooling, even though she tried with all her heart. Poor health would continue to plague her for much of her life. Her inability to attend school, however, did not stop her informal education. Her autobiographical sketches reflect a young woman with both a probing mind and a sensitive nature.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1840, she came under the influence of William Miller who was teaching that Jesus would return in 1843. Eventually, at a summer camp she attended, she listened to a man speaking about salvation. She described her salvation experience:

“While bowed at the altar with others who were seeking the Lord, all the language of my heart was: ‘Help, Jesus; save me, or I perish! I will never cease to entreat till my prayer is heard and my sins are forgiven.’ I felt my needy, helpless condition as never before. As I knelt and prayed, suddenly my burden left me, and my heart was light.”<sup>9</sup>

When Jesus did not return, first in 1843 and then again in 1844, as predicted by Miller, the disillusioned

Millerites experienced what is known as the "Great Disappointment." However, just two months afterward, "Ellen, then seventeen years of age, experienced the first of over two-thousand visions she would have over the course of her lifetime."<sup>10</sup> Approximately a week later, she received her second vision. In this vision, the Lord commissioned her to tell others what she had seen.<sup>11</sup> Some might regard this second vision as the beginning of her ministry, which continued for seventy years.

In 1846, Ellen married a fellow former Millerite and fellow believer, James White (1821-1881). James and Ellen White and a retired sea captain named Joseph Bates (1792-1872) became the three founders of Seventh-day Adventism in 1863.<sup>12</sup> The movement was called "Seventh-day Adventists" as early as 1860.

Bates died in 1872, just shy of his 80th birthday. Ellen's husband, James, died in 1881 at age 60.<sup>13</sup> This left White as the only living Adventist founder, a role she occupied for 34 years. "She died on July 16, 1915, at the age of eighty-seven, having suffered a hip fracture several months earlier."<sup>14</sup>

### SOME UNUSUAL DOCTRINES OF ELLEN G. WHITE

Adventist leaders, such as Knight, sometimes point out, "we should note that Ellen White's gift did not play a prominent role in the development of Adventist doctrine."<sup>15</sup> He also wrote:

"The primary method used by the [Adventist] pioneers in their doctrinal formation was to study the Bible until a general consensus developed. At that point Ellen White would sometimes receive a vision on a topic already studied; primarily to reaffirm the consensus and to help those who were still out of harmony with the majority to accept the correctness of the group's biblically derived conclusions. Thus we can best view Mrs. White's role in doctrinal development as confirmation rather than initiation."<sup>16</sup>

Knight admits that, in contrast to her not originating Adventist doctrines, "she sometimes played a more prominent role in the development of positions in the area of Adventist lifestyle."<sup>17</sup> This included her role in dictating to Adventists on matters of diet, dress, adornment, and so forth.

One doctrine White taught that was unusual, at least in the way she approached it, was her teaching that Jesus kept the Mosaic Law in order to show that it was possible for man to keep the Law (not in man's own strength, but in the power of Christ). In doing so, Christ vindicated God against a supposed charge that Satan had made — that is nowhere found in the Bible — in which Satan supposedly charged God as being unjust in giving mankind laws which they were unable to obey.<sup>18</sup>

White further taught that God expects Christians to obey the Ten Commandments, especially the fourth commandment, that is, keeping the Saturday Sabbath.<sup>19</sup>

Unusual doctrines taught by White include a belief in conditional immortality: the belief that people are not created with innate immortality, but that immortality is bestowed only on the saved after the return of Jesus. A necessary corollary of this is the denial of the doctrine of the everlasting punishment of unbelievers. While White would agree that Satan and unbelievers will be punished, their punishment is finite, after which they will be annihilated.

Another of White's doctrines was keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. She taught that, at a particular point in the future, observance of Sunday as the Sabbath would become the infamous "mark of the beast" spoken of in Revelation 13:16-17. In connection with this, she also taught that those who observed Saturday as the Sabbath would be persecuted for doing so.<sup>20</sup>

Co-founder Joseph Bates contributed the Sabbath doctrine to the movement by teaching it to the newly married James and Ellen. The following year, Ellen White had a vision confirming this teaching.

White also taught the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment doctrines. These included the belief that Jesus is now involved in a further work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary; and that He is closely investigating the life and works of all who have professed to be Christians.

According to White, Christ commenced this investigative judgment in 1844 and this was the biblical event prophesied to occur in 1844, an event that William Miller misinterpreted as being Christ's return to earth. Through these doctrines, Adventist believers sought to explain the fact that Christ didn't return to earth in 1844, as proclaimed by Miller. Miller supposedly got the date right, but misunderstood what Christ would do on that date!<sup>21</sup>

Miller himself was never an Adventist, and didn't accept this teaching of Seventh-day Adventism.<sup>22</sup>

Without the heavenly sanctuary doctrine and that of the investigative judgment, Seventh-day Adventism has no *raison d'être* (reason for existence).

White established dietary laws for Adventists to observe, as well as other aspects of their physical lives. She also taught what is referred to as "the three angels' messages," so called because of three angels mentioned in Revelation 14:6-11. Seventh-day Adventists believe that they themselves are the faithful remnant Christian Church, whose mission it is to proclaim the "three angels' messages." One Adventist source briefly explains their understanding of these messages:

"The first angel's message proclaims the everlasting gospel and calls for the restoration of the true worship of God as Creator because the judgment hour has arrived. The second angel warns against all humanly originated forms of worship. Finally, the third angel proclaims God's most solemn warning against worshipping the beast and his image —

which all who reject the gospel of righteousness by faith ultimately will do."<sup>23</sup>

White also taught that she was a messenger of God to His remnant church, the Seventh-day Adventists.

### THE GREAT CONTROVERSY THEME

One doctrine that deserves special mention is her teaching of "The Great Controversy." Knight wrote:

"Ellen White claims [it] was first revealed to her in vision about 1848 and reinforced through an expanded vision at Lovett's Grove, Ohio, in the spring of 1858."<sup>24</sup>

She enlarged upon this doctrine throughout her life. Knight wrote:

"She first set forth the great controversy theme in a series of four small books published between 1858 and 1864 and entitled *Spiritual Gifts*.<sup>25</sup> Those volumes were considerably expanded and published as the four-volume *Spirit of Prophecy* series between 1870 and 1884. But developments in the 1880s led Ellen White to begin revising the *Spirit of Prophecy* volumes into the [five-volume] Conflict [of the Ages] Series."<sup>26</sup>

The fifth and final volume of The Conflict of the Ages Series is actually titled *The Great Controversy* and appeared first in 1888. A revised version was published in 1911.

One Adventist author described The Great Controversy:

"Simply put, this theme advances the idea that throughout its history the world has been and still is the field of the great battle between Christ and His angels and Satan and his angels. While this battle has cosmic implications, it also affects every human being who has ever lived on planet Earth. Ellen White viewed the Second Coming as the culmination of the controversy, when Christ's victory over Satan will be fully realized and

all of Satan's evils eradicated. The final judgment sets forth the issues before all intelligent beings and vindicates the character of God as displayed in the death of Christ on the cross."<sup>27</sup>

The Great Controversy has become a cardinal doctrine of Adventist belief. It is now Belief #8 of their current 28 Adventist beliefs, which states:

"All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with the freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6:8; 2 Pet. 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)"<sup>28</sup>

Adventist theologian Herbert E. Douglass wrote:

"All significant theologies have an organizing principle. Many scholars have identified Ellen White's unifying principle as the Great Controversy Theme. This provided a coherent framework for her theological thought as well as for her principles in education, health, missiology, social issues, and environmental topics."<sup>29</sup>

### HOW SHE VIEWED HERSELF AND HOW SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM VIEWS HER

In the authoritative Adventist reference work, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, we read:

"Ellen White never assumed the title of prophetess, but she did not object when others called her by that title. She explained, 'Early in my youth I was asked several times, Are you a prophet? I have ever responded, I am the Lord's messenger. I know that many have called me a prophet, but I have made no claim to this title. ... Why have I not claimed to be a prophet? — Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word "prophet" signifies. ... To claim to be a prophetess is something that I have never done. If others call me by that name, I have no controversy with them. But my work has covered so many lines that I can not call myself other than a messenger."<sup>30</sup>

Regarding what White has said above: First, her comments above seem to be a rather coy admission that she is, indeed, a prophet. Further, she *appears* to be saying that she is actually *more* than a prophet, as when the Lord Jesus declared about John the Baptist that John was both "a prophet. ... and more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9).

And although she says that she has not claimed to be a prophet, she also says, "I am the Lord's messenger." Is there a difference? In fact, in various places in her writings, she equates her own writings with the words of God Himself. The following are three examples:

"My Savior declared me to be His messenger. 'Your work,' He instructed me, 'is to bear My word.'"<sup>31</sup>

"Yet now when I send you a testimony of warning and re-

proof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You have thereby insulted the Spirit of God. You know how the Lord has manifested Himself through the Spirit of prophecy. Past, present, and future have passed before me."<sup>32</sup>

"The statement which you quote from Testimony No. 31 [vol. 5, p. 67] is correct: 'In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision — the precious rays of light shining from the throne.' It is true concerning the articles in our papers and in the many volumes of my books."<sup>33</sup>

Whether or not she ever assumed the title of "prophetess," that is how she viewed herself and she encouraged others to believe this about her both by not correcting them for calling her a prophet and also by her equating her writings with revelation from God Himself. She used her supposed office of prophet to cow people into submission to her teachings by implying that by not heeding her, they were rebelling against the Lord.

Contrast her example with that of the Apostle Paul who wrote to the Corinthians, "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy" (2 Corinthians 1:24a, NIV).

The Scripture declares, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10d). In what appears to be a serious, self-aggrandizing misapplication of this Scripture, White and Seventh-day Adventists refer to her writings as the *Spirit of Prophecy* and "communications from Ellen White to others, either oral or written, became known as 'testimonies.'"<sup>34</sup>

So, despite her not ascribing to herself the title of "prophet," she clearly regarded herself as *at least* that, if not more; and Seventh-day

Adventism regards her as a prophetess. In fact, Belief #18 of their current 28 beliefs, states:

"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 — the Lord's messenger. Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the [Adventist] church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)"<sup>35</sup>

The words above, "the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested," is itself an unacknowledged quotation from Ellen White.<sup>36</sup> When Adventists use her statement "the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested," the reader should add the words, "except Ellen White's teaching and experiences."

It is doubtful that one would find any Adventist literature acknowledging the error of any of White's unbiblical doctrines — certainly not for any of her *major* doctrines, such as the investigative judgment. In this, and in other ways, they elevate White's authority over the Scriptures, even though they staunchly deny that they do so.

Further evidence that they exalt White's teachings above the Scriptures is that, because it is a matter of doctrine for them that White was a prophetess, they then view the inspiration of the Scriptures in the same way that they view the inspiration of White's writings. Thus if White's writings contain factual errors then the Bible must also contain factual errors.<sup>37</sup> If White's writings were not verbally inspired by God because she sometimes changed things she had written, then the Bible must not be verbally inspired either.<sup>38</sup> Because Seventh-day Adventism accepts, as a matter of faith, that White was a true

prophet, then the Bible must only be inspired to the same degree and extent that they believe White was. So, they understand the Bible's inspiration through their understanding of the supposed inspiration of White's writings. And to defend that inspiration and her "prophethood," they sometimes denigrate the inspiration of the Scriptures to bring its writings down to the level of White's.

White, herself, denied that she was verbally inspired by God:

"Although I am as dependent on the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation."<sup>39</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist church also denies that White's writings were verbally inspired, despite what some of its members might believe to the contrary regarding her writings. In accordance with her quotation above, they believe that it is only her *thoughts* that were inspired, not her very words; although, in practice, they sometimes give the impression that they do believe her words were inspired.

The fact that "her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth" for the Adventist church shows that they hold her writings to be more than ordinary writings. Additionally, item #8 in their current baptismal vow (which must be affirmed by anyone joining an Adventist church by baptism or profession of faith<sup>40</sup>) asks, "Do you accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church?"<sup>41</sup>

### A LESSER LIGHT?

White saw herself as someone whose words would not add to the Bible, but would lead people to the Bible. In *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, we read:

"She saw her work as that of leading people back to the Bible. 'Little heed is given to the Bible,'

she said, therefore 'the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.'"42

And this volume also states:

"In response to believers who considered her writings an addition to the Bible, she wrote, saying, 'I took the precious Bible and surrounded it with the several *Testimonies for the Church*, given for the people of God. ... You are not familiar with the Scriptures. If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*. It is because you have neglected to acquaint yourselves with God's inspired Book that He has sought to reach you by simple, direct testimonies, calling your attention to the words of inspiration which you had neglected to obey, and urging you to fashion your lives in accordance with its pure and elevated teachings.'"43

In the quoted paragraph above, she refers to "the several *Testimonies for the Church*," later in the paragraph abbreviated simply as, "*Testimonies*." Herbert Douglass explained:

"... the published compilations of [White's] letters, manuscripts, and previously published periodical articles were eventually assembled into nine volumes known as *Testimonies for the Church*."44

These nine volumes comprise a total of 4,738 pages,<sup>45</sup> being written and compiled from December 1855<sup>46</sup> "to the late summer of 1909."<sup>47</sup> By contrast, I have a single column Bible, whose text comprises 1,614 pages. If the purpose of her *Testimonies* was to point people to the Bible one would expect her work to be less expansive than the work to which she was pointing. And this doesn't take into account the *many* other books attributed to her, such as *Steps to Christ*, the five-volume Conflict of the Ages Series, and so on.<sup>48</sup>

## SHRINKING WHITE'S LITERARY OUTPUT

To keep things in proper perspective, in speaking about White's vast literary output, realize that some of her books, such as *Steps to Christ*, were actually arranged compilations of material that she had previously written.<sup>49</sup> We have mentioned that her teaching on "The Great Controversy" started out small, but grew in size over the years, appearing in three different books.

Additionally, certain things she shares in some of her books are a rehash of ideas which she wrote in earlier books. For instance, details about her life — her conversion, her first vision, etc. — appear in more than one of her books. And, as all preachers do on different occasions, she sometimes related the same or similar teachings.

All these factors mean that her literary output is not quite as large as it might first appear. None of these things is problematic. However, there is another fact that *does* make her apparently immense literary output problematic — primarily for one claiming to be "the Lord's messenger."

## WHITE'S PLAGIARISM

It is a sad fact that White extensively plagiarized the work of others throughout her life. Anyone who questions this is referred to a book called *The White Lie* by Walter Rea, a former Adventist minister and self-described (former) "devotee of Ellen G. White and her writings."<sup>50</sup> Others, past and present, have also noted her plagiarisms.

Charges of White's plagiarism surfaced even during her lifetime, being made as early as 1887. At that time they were made by Dudley M. Canright,<sup>51</sup> a former Adventist minister who knew both White and her husband James. Although Canright had once been a defender of Seventh-day Adventism, he permanently left the movement in 1887, becoming perhaps its fiercest critic for the rest of his days.<sup>52</sup> Another who accused White of plagiarism while she was

still alive was Dr. Charles E. Stewart, in 1907.<sup>53</sup> White sometimes copied verbatim — or almost so — and sometimes simply re-worked the material of others, or took their ideas, without giving them due credit. Worse still, she sometimes described as visions from the Lord, things that she actually took from others' writings.<sup>54</sup>

The very first vision she had — in 1844 — was remarkably similar to a vision of someone else, whom she had heard as a young girl:

"As a matter of fact, Ellen White's *very first vision*, that of December, 1844, borrowed extensively from another Adventist, William E. Foy. Foy had two 'visions' in 1842 and another in 1844. In 1845, shortly before his death he published and copyrighted an account of his visions titled, '*The Christian Experience of William E. Foy*.' Compare that title with Ellen White's later publication in 1851, *The Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*. Even the titles are similar. The SDA Encyclopedia, page 475, says that Ellen Harmon 'heard Foy speak in Beethoven Hall in her home city, Portland, Maine, when she was but a girl.'"55

Additionally, there is evidence that strongly suggests White may have drawn on John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost* for some of her "inspired" Great Controversy teaching.

An Adventist student in her master's thesis comparing the fall of man in Milton's *Paradise Lost* with what White wrote on the same subject stated:

"Referring to the preceding chapters of this thesis, one is impressed by the similarity of factual content in *Paradise Lost* and in [White's book] *Patriarchs and Prophets*. In fact, the writer of this thesis found no disagreement between the two authors in stating significant facts. There were frequent differences in manner of statement, in amount of detail, in emphasis given, or even in the

exact order of a series of events, but none in facts pertinent to the Biblical story. Of unusual significance is the correlation found in a number of instances where both authors depict with some detail an experience which is not found in the Bible. ... [She then lists seven such non-biblical points in the accounts of man's fall common to both White and Milton.] These likenesses in the narrative on points where the Scriptures are silent intensify the question: Why are these two authors, living two hundred years apart, so much in agreement on major facts?"<sup>56</sup>

Because of the charges of plagiarism by Walter Rea and others, the Adventist denomination commissioned one of its own scholars, Dr. Fred Veltman, to study White's life of Christ, entitled, *The Desire of Ages*. This very careful study took place from 1980-1988, and covered just 15 of the book's 87 chapters.

Afterwards, in a report written for an Adventist magazine, Veltman wrote:

"Of the 15 chapters' 2,624 sentence units, we found 823 (31 percent) to be in some degree clearly dependent upon material appearing in our 500-plus literary sources. ... The *average* dependency of 823 dependent sentences rated just a little higher than the level of 'loose paraphrase.'"<sup>57</sup>

In the second part of his report, Veltman wrote:

"Ellen White used a minimum of 23 sources of various types of literature, including fiction, in her writings on the life of Christ. ... Space does not permit us to survey all 23 here. But there is no need to cover the entire lot, since many fall under the literary category of 'Victorian lives of Christ.' The books in this category were never intended to be biographies. Today they would probably be classified as historical fiction."<sup>58</sup>

Veltman also stated:

"It is of first importance to note that Ellen White herself, not her literary assistants,<sup>59</sup> composed the basic content of the *DA* [i.e., *The Desire of Ages*] text. In doing so she was the one who took literary expressions 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. The literary parallels are not the result of accident or photographic memory."<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, Veltman observed:

"Implicitly or explicitly, Ellen White and others speaking on her behalf did not admit to and even denied literary dependency on her part."<sup>61</sup>

He also 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 rather than original."<sup>62</sup>

Some ways that Seventh-day Adventism has dealt with White's plagiarism is to minimize it, by calling it "literary borrowing," rather than "stealing" or "plagiarism;"<sup>63</sup> or to say that such copying was common among various authors, and was not an issue and/or to say that, according to the standards of her day, what she did was acceptable. Another tactic they use is to claim that the biblical writers also, at times, used the words of others. A fourth way they attempt to dodge the charge of plagiarism is to point to a vague, general statement White made in the Introduction of her book, *The Great Controversy*:

"In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations

are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject. In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works."<sup>64</sup>

Let the reader judge whether or not this brief admission does adequate justice to the authors and works of those whom she has used. Also realize that it does not appear that any of her other books where she plagiarized contain even this much of a vague, generalized admission.<sup>65</sup>

White's apologists seem to do everything but admit that she *stole* the thoughts and words of others, denying them the credit that they deserved, and taking it for herself; at times, even claiming that what she stole from others was a vision she had received directly from God.

### ASSESSING ELLEN G. WHITE AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

In addition to White's plagiarism, there are other things that warn against regarding White as a prophet of God.

For instance, she prophesied certain events that didn't come to pass. Some examples are given by former Adventist pastor Sydney Cleveland in his book, *White Washed*.<sup>66</sup> Cleveland's summaries of these prophecies that never occurred, which he shows from her writings, included:

"God told Ellen White that [some] individuals attending the Conference at Battle Creek on May 27, 1856 would still be alive at Christ's second coming."<sup>67</sup>

"During the Civil War, England will attack the United States and humble America into the dust."<sup>68</sup>

"Old Jerusalem will never be built up."<sup>69</sup>

How did White and the Adventists deal with her failed prophecies? Sometimes they claimed that these

prophecies contained an unstated condition; sometimes White also denied that she had made certain prophecies.

The Bible says:

“And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ — when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:21-22).

White also taught false, unbiblical doctrine in her role as “God’s messenger.” We noted some of these things earlier:

- Her placing Christians under the dominion of the Ten Commandments (refuted by New Testament passages such as 2 Corinthians 3; Romans 7:1-6; Galatians 2:19-3:25; 4:21-5:4; 1 Timothy 1:5-11). Additionally, in this same vein, she said that it was Satan who said that man was unable to keep the Law (even though this assertion is never found in the Bible); whereas, it is actually *God* who said that man is unable to keep the Law (Acts 15:5-11; Romans 3:20-22; Galatians 2:16, 19; 3:21-25).

- Her teaching that man ceases to exist when he dies, until the return of Christ; and that “the declaration of the serpent to Eve in Eden — ‘Ye shall not surely die’ — was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul;”<sup>70</sup> whereas, it was *Jesus*, not Satan, who said, “whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:26a).

- Her denial of everlasting punishment for unbelievers, which contradicts Scriptures such as Matthew 25:41, 46 and Revelation 20:10, 15.

- Her forbidding of foods, contrary to Colossians 2:16-23 and 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

- Her doctrine of the investigative judgment, which is imposed on the Scriptures, rather than derived from them.

Additionally, Walter Martin declared, “If Seventh-day Adventists are to defend their claim for Mrs. White’s inspiration, they must explain a number of contradictions in her writings.”<sup>71</sup>

In evaluating Seventh-day Adventism, Martin wrote that he had read “almost all the writings of Ellen G. White.”<sup>72</sup>

Regarding White’s plagiarism, Martin, who was a sympathetic critic of Seventh-day Adventism, confessed his belief that she did, indeed, plagiarize. He also stated:

“I think those around her aided and abetted her in her ‘cover-up.’ Also, I think the White Estate continued the cover-up after her death for many years. No objective person, in possession of all the facts, can doubt that.”<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, he opined, “She was a Christian who committed a sin. Christians can and do commit sins.”<sup>74</sup>

He then wrote:

“A biblical false prophet was not a believer. A biblical false prophet was a servant of the devil attempting to lead people away from the truth. Mrs. White, in my opinion, made false statements. She misused what she claimed was the prophetic gift she had. But one cannot say that she was just like a biblical false prophet. Of course, technically, all would agree that the person who prophesies in the name of God and turns out to be wrong, has prophesied falsely. But Mrs. White is not a biblical false prophet because she was a true Christian, even though what she did was sinful.”<sup>75</sup>

Martin makes some good points about false prophets. Yet he does not think White merits the classification of “false prophet,” in the biblical sense because he believes she was a genuine Christian. With all due respect to Martin, Personal Freedom Outreach is not convinced that White was a true Christian or that she was not a false prophet. Perhaps she more

appropriately fulfilled the Scripture that says:

“And men will rise up from your own number with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them” (Acts 20:30, HCSB).

Furthermore, because White steadfastly proclaimed the false, unbiblical doctrine of the investigative judgment and because this doctrine is the major and ongoing reason for Seventh-day Adventism having come into being as a separate organization, it is our conclusion that there is no legitimate reason or need for even the existence of Seventh-day Adventism as an entity.

### Endnotes:

1. George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996, pg. 7. The beginning pages of this short biography (of which this page is one) are unnumbered.
2. There are various editions of Ellen White’s books, and so page numbers used for them in this article may differ from other editions of her works. Because of this, wherever possible, I have tried to cite standard editions of her works published by either of the two main Seventh-day Adventist publishers in the U.S.: Pacific Press Publishing Association or Review and Herald Publishing Association.
3. The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005, pg. 257.
4. *Ibid.*, pg. 256.
5. *Ibid.*, pg. 257.
6. This phrase is often capitalized in SDA literature as “The Great Controversy.”
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Meeting Ellen White*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
9. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943, pg. 23; sometimes referred to in SDA literature simply as *Life Sketches*.
10. Gary G. Land in Daniel G. Reid, Coordinating Editor, *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990, pg. 1249, s.v., “White, Ellen Gould Harmon (1827-1915).” Land is a history professor at an SDA University.
11. *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, op. cit., pp. 64-71 contains her account of both her first and second visions, etc.

12. George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999, pg. 43.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.
14. *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, op. cit., pg. 1250, s.v., "White, Ellen Gould Harmon (1827-1915)."
15. *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, op. cit., pg. 37.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005, pp. 24, 117, 761-762. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005, pp. 503-504. (This edition of *The Great Controversy* is based on Ellen White's 1911 edition, rather than her earlier 1888 edition.) Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948, Vol. 8, pp. 207-210.
19. Some Christian denominations, such as Presbyterianism, also teach that God expects Christians enabled by grace to obey the Ten Commandments. (However, Presbyterians understand the Sabbath to be on Sunday, rather than Saturday, because of Christ's resurrection on Sunday.)
20. See *The Great Controversy*, op. cit., pp. 590-592, 604-611.
21. For White's teaching on the investigative judgment, see the chapter on it entitled, "Facing Life's Record" in *ibid.*, pp. 479-491. Concerning Miller's "misunderstanding," see *ibid.*, pp. 351-354.
22. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985, pg. 414.
23. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pp. 195-196.
24. *Meeting Ellen White*, op. cit., pg. 96.
25. She presented *The Great Controversy* in volume 1 of this series.
26. *Ibid.*, pg. 96.
27. Jud Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010, pg. 217.
28. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. 113.
29. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998, pg. 256.
30. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. 255, ellipsis in original. Explaining the source of the quotation, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* states, "White, 'A Messenger,' *Review and Herald*, July 26, 1906, p. 8. The title 'the Lord's messenger' was given by inspiration (*ibid.*)," (*ibid.*, pg. 261). However, the article from which White's quotations are excerpted above can be found in the compilation, Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006, Vol. 1, pp. 32, 34).
31. *Selected Messages*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 32.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 27.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 29, brackets in original.
34. *Messenger of the Lord*, op. cit., pg. 117.
35. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. 247.
36. *The Great Controversy*, op. cit., pg. 9. The only difference in the words quoted above and the passage in *The Great Controversy* is that, where it uses the words "the Bible" above, in White's book it says, "the word of God."
37. For example, see George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How to understand and apply her writings*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1997, pp. 110-111, 118.
38. For example, *ibid.*, pp. 113-118.
39. *Selected Messages*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 37, quoting from *The Review and Herald*, Oct. 8, 1867.
40. The Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2010, pg. 46.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 47.
42. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. 259. (The White quotation in the cited paragraph was originally from "White, 'An Open Letter,' *Review and Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903, pg. 15.)
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259, ellipsis in original. (The White quotation is from *Testimonies for the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 664-665.)
44. *Messenger of the Lord*, op. cit., pg. 117.
45. *Testimonies for the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 5.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Testimonies for the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 9, pg. 3.
48. The idea of comparing the size of the Bible to the size of White's writings is taken from Sydney Cleveland, *White Washed*. Casa Grande, Ariz.: LAM Publications, LLC, 2011, pg. iv.
49. William Fagal, *101 Questions About Ellen White and Her Writings*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010, pg. 35-36.
50. Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie*. Turlock, Calif.: M&R Publications, 1982, pg. 19. (The introductory pages, of which this is part, contain no numbering.)
51. Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*. Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951, pg. 417.
52. *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 442-443.
53. Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, pg. 100.
54. Robert Olson, former secretary of the White Estate (the organization in charge of her writings) stated in an article for a magazine for SDA clergy, "We know of perhaps a half dozen cases where Ellen White used a passage from a human author to help her describe what she had heard or seen in vision." Robert W. Olson, "Ellen White's denials," *Ministry*, February 1991, pg. 17.
55. Maurice Barnett, *Ellen G. White & Inspiration*. Beaumont, Texas: The Preceptor Co., 1983, pp. 40-41, italics in original.
56. Ruth Elizabeth Burgeson, *A Comparative Study of the Fall of Man as Treated by John Milton and Ellen G. White*, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 42-43, italics in original.
57. Fred Veltman, "The Desire of Ages project: the data," Part 1 of a two-part series, *Ministry*, October 1990, pg. 6, emphasis added.
58. Fred Veltman, "The Desire of Ages project: the conclusions," Part 2 of two, *Ministry*, December 1990, pg. 13.
59. White did have literary assistants, although she denied that they were responsible for any of the actual writing, other than cleaning up her grammar, and making her thoughts and sentences flow better. One of her literary assistants, Marian Davis, helped in compiling and organizing some of her previously written materials for her books.
60. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*, pg. 12, italic in original.
63. Former Adventist pastor Dale Ratzlaff correctly noted that SDAs euphemize her plagiarism by referring to it as "borrowings." Dale Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*. Glendale, Ariz.: LAM Publications, LLC, 2009, pg. 333, including note 26 on that page.
64. *The Great Controversy*, op. cit., pg. 14.
65. See Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on The Sanctuary and on Ellen White*. Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981, pg. 73, Question #78.
66. *White Washed*, op. cit., see pp. 65-88.
67. *Ibid.*, pg. 75, referencing Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 131, 132.
68. *Ibid.*, pg. 78, referencing Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 258-259.
69. *Ibid.*, pg. 79, referencing, Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000, pg. 75.
70. *The Great Controversy*, op. cit., pg. 533.
71. *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 444.
72. *Ibid.*, pg. 445.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*

Perhaps there would have been no Seventh-day Adventist movement today except for one event:

“On October 23, 1844, the morning following the ‘Great Disappointment,’ Hiram Edson, a devout Adventist and follower of William Miller, was wending his way homeward with his friend, O.R.L. Crosier. In order to avoid the mocking gazes and taunts of their neighbors, they cut across a cornfield.”<sup>5</sup>

In that cornfield, Edson believed he received a message from God that understanding would be given as to why Christ hadn’t returned the day before. He and Crosier went out to encourage their fellow Millerites.<sup>6</sup> What happened during their walk was pivotal. Adventist<sup>7</sup> historian George R. Knight wrote:

“As they crossed a field, Edson reported, ‘I was stopped about midway’ and ‘heaven seemed open to my view. ... I saw distinctly, and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days [mentioned in Daniel 8:14], that he for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth.”<sup>8</sup>

In Adventism, these ideas became known as “the sanctuary doctrine” and the related doctrine of “the investigative judgment” (also known as “the pre-Advent judgment”), and form one of their current 28 fundamental beliefs. Whereas the sanctuary doctrine tells *what event supposedly occurred* on Oct. 22, 1844 (Jesus entering “the second apartment” of the heavenly sanctuary), the investigative judgment doctrine tells *what Christ is supposedly doing* since that date: exposing the records of all professed believers who have ever lived to the scrutiny of “heavenly intelligences.”<sup>9</sup>

According to the doctrine of the investigative judgment:

“In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He [Jesus] entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection.”<sup>10</sup>

This doctrine is unique to Adventism. It teaches that Christ’s atonement on the cross was incomplete without the sprinkling of His blood in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, Adventism teaches that Christ’s atonement was not finished on the cross, despite His cry of “It is finished” (John 19:30).<sup>11</sup>

Knight tells us:

“Thus while the majority of the Millerite Adventists, under the leadership of [Joshua V.] Himes, looked back on the time element in their interpretation of the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 as an error, the group evolving into Seventh-day Adventism held that the Millerites had been correct on the time, but wrong as to the event to take place on October 22, 1844. After all, they noted, no one had been able to refute Miller’s time calculations. But further study made it obvious to them that the Millerites had misinterpreted the symbolism of both the ‘cleansing’ and the ‘sanctuary.’”<sup>12</sup>

Walter Martin commented:

“The fact remains, however, that the Millerites erred in their prophetic, chronological interpretation of the book of Daniel, and only the concept of Hiram Edson

in the cornfield and the explanatory writings of O.R.L. Crosier buttressed by the [confirmatory] ‘revelations’ of Ellen G. White saved the day.”<sup>13</sup>

Martin also says, “William Miller, it should be noted, was *never* a Seventh-day Adventist and stated that he had ‘no confidence’ in the ‘new theories’ which emerged from the shambles of the Millerite movement.”<sup>14</sup>

Although men like Edson and Crosier were Adventist pioneers, the three founders of Seventh-day Adventism were Joseph Bates, James White, and his wife, Ellen G. White.<sup>15</sup> The movement was named “Seventh-day Adventists” in 1860. This name declares two features of their message: Keeping the Sabbath (on Saturday) and looking forward to Christ’s “advent.”

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE SDA GENERAL CONFERENCE

On May 21, 1863, almost 19 years after the Great Disappointment, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was formally established.<sup>16</sup> It consisted of 3,500 members.<sup>17</sup> Soon after its establishment, Ellen G. White gave her assessment of the importance of the General Conference:

“...there is no higher tribunal upon earth than the church of God. And if the members of the church will not submit to the decision of the church, and will not be counseled and advised by them, they cannot be helped. ... God has bestowed power on the church and the ministers of the church, and it is not a light matter to resist the authority and despise the judgment of God’s ministers.”<sup>18</sup>

Elsewhere, she stated:

“But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered.”<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, in a conversation on the evangelical television program, *The John Ankerberg Show*, between

Walter Martin and William Johnsson, who at that time was “the editor of the *Adventist Review*, the official organ of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination,”<sup>20</sup> Martin made a statement with which the latter obviously agreed: “The General Conference when it is in session is the highest constituted authority on earth.”<sup>21</sup> To this, Johnsson responded, “‘In session.’ And it’s the session that gives the [at that time, 27] fundamental beliefs.”<sup>22</sup>

A final example of the esteem in which the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is held is seen in the following quotation. In recounting an incident that occurred during his time as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Dale Ratzlaff wrote:

“In our discussion it was mentioned by the elders that there were people on the conference committee who considered the Dallas Statement<sup>23</sup> to be inspired. They said that because it was formulated and approved at a world gathering of the General Conference, and Ellen White said the judgment of the General Conference is God’s highest authority on earth, then the Dallas Statement is essentially God’s Word.”<sup>24</sup>

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists meets every five years.

### SDA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Adventist membership currently exceeds 17 million worldwide,<sup>25</sup> with a little more than 1.1 million in the North American Division.<sup>26</sup> Although Adventism was founded in the U.S., most of its membership is elsewhere. Although it is a small body, its members have made a number of significant achievements, including operating schools from grade school through university level, publishing houses, hospitals, a disaster relief agency, and more.<sup>27</sup>

The basic unit of Adventist organization is the congregation. One level above this, the congregations in a particular geographic area form a local conference. At the next level, a

union conference comprises a group of local conferences.<sup>28</sup> Then:

“The entire world is divided into thirteen *divisions* — each composed of several union conferences. Together, these divisions make up the worldwide level of church government called the *General Conference*. The world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church — its General Conference — is located in Silver Spring, Maryland. The chief executive of the church is its president, who is elected (or reelected) every five years at a General Conference *session*. Delegates from each level of church government convene for this quinquennial session to hear reports and transact business that relates to the world church.”<sup>29</sup>

### SDA FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

Adventists say that they have no formal creed. One of their sources states, “Adventists have but one creed: ‘The Bible, and the Bible alone.’”<sup>30</sup> However, their 28 fundamental beliefs are a “revisable creed.”

These beliefs, some that have a biblical foundation and some that don’t, function as authoritative statements of what Adventism currently believes.<sup>31</sup> While Adventists boast of having no creed except the Bible, where their fundamental beliefs are *not* in harmony with the Bible, the fundamental beliefs actually supersede the Bible in their authority. Thus it is the fundamental beliefs that are the authority of Adventism, rather than “The Bible, and the Bible alone.”

Some of these fundamental beliefs<sup>32</sup> are the same (or similar) to orthodox Christian beliefs. These include the Trinity, the deity of Christ,<sup>33</sup> the resurrection of Christ, the Second Coming of Christ,<sup>34</sup> salvation by faith in Christ alone, and so forth.

Some beliefs that they share with certain cults and a few professing Evangelicals include annihilation of the wicked and conditional immortality, which teaches man does not have an eternal soul, but in the resurrection believers will be given eternal life while unbelievers will be annihilated

and cease to exist. They also believe, as do some Christians, that a saved person can lose his salvation and that the Ten Commandments — especially Sabbath-keeping — are binding upon everyone, including Christians.

Beliefs that are unique to Adventism include many prophetic interpretations. Some of these interpretations are the sanctuary doctrine, the theory that in 1844 Christ moved from the Holy place in heaven into the Holy of Holies; the related doctrine of the investigative judgment, the theory that “heavenly intelligences” are currently examining the record of the lives of professing believers past and present to determine their eternal destiny; and the belief that during the Millennium Satan will wander a desolated earth with no one to tempt. They also believe that Ellen G. White was a prophet of God and that her writings are authoritative.

### IS ADVENTISM A CULT?

The question of whether Adventism is a cult or not has existed at least since the late 1950s, when Walter Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse investigated the movement. Martin then “claimed that Seventh-day Adventism should not be classified as a non-Christian cult but rather as a somewhat heterodox<sup>35</sup> Christian church body.”<sup>36</sup>

Some Christian researchers and organizations have agreed with Martin. These include Kenneth Samples, Christian Research Institute, Probe Ministries, and Geoffrey Paxton. Many other Christian researchers continue to label Adventism as a cult, including former Adventist pastor Dale Ratzlaff, Edmond Gruss, Paul Carden, Kenneth Boa, Ruth Tucker, Anthony Hoekema, John Gerstner, Josh McDowell, Don Stewart, and others.

In determining whether Adventism is a cult *theologically*, the criteria will be doctrinal, not sociological or psychological.

For purposes of examining Adventism, Alan Gomes’ definition of a “cult of Christianity” is a good guide:

“A cult of Christianity is a group of people, which claiming to be

Christian, embraces a particular doctrinal system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or organization, which (system) denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible."<sup>37</sup>

Concerning the phrase, "A cult of Christianity," used in the definition above, Gomes states, "A cult is a group that deviates doctrinally from a 'parent' or 'host' religion; that is, cults grow out of and deviate from a previously established religion."<sup>38</sup>

Concerning "the central doctrines of the Christian faith," mentioned in the above definition, Gomes states:

"Certain Christian doctrines constitute the core of the faith. Central doctrines include the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection [of Jesus], the atoning work of Christ on the cross, and salvation by grace through faith. These doctrines so comprise the essence of the Christian faith that to remove any of them is to make the belief system non-Christian."<sup>39</sup>

Gomes also notes that not all doctrines of the Christian faith are "central doctrines." Examples he gives of non-central doctrines include, "the timing of the tribulation, the method of baptism, or the structure of church government."<sup>40</sup> Many more examples of non-central Christian doctrines could be given. However, just because a doctrine isn't a *central* Christian doctrine doesn't mean it's an *unimportant* doctrine. Christians can disagree, even vehemently, on non-central doctrines and still be brothers and sisters in Christ.

Gomes makes this important point:

"Some cults give the impression of orthodoxy, but have so redefined terminology that the doctrine is orthodox in name only. For example, Mormons speak of their 'Heavenly Father,' as do Christians, but their Heavenly Father is really an exalted man, not the God of the Bible."<sup>41</sup>

Christian researchers John Ankerberg and John Weldon state, "from a Christian perspective, 'spiritual counterfeits' or 'heretical groups' is just as fitting [a term as the word 'cult'] and in some ways preferable [to it]."<sup>42</sup>

## EARLY ADVENTISM

Using Gomes' definition, early Adventism was clearly cultic. Researcher Kenneth Samples states:

"The theological views of the primitive Adventist movement (though hardly unified and systematic) reflected a non- or anti-Trinitarian view of God, a semi-Arian Christology,<sup>43</sup> a message of restorationism, and a strongly legalistic understanding of the gospel. From the standpoint of historic Christian or creedal orthodoxy, the primitive Adventist movement was a theologically cultic movement or a heretical sect in its basic theology."<sup>44</sup>

Even contemporary Adventist historian and theologian George R. Knight concurs:

"... the vast majority of the earliest Adventist leaders could not subscribe to at least three sections of the denomination's 1980 statement of beliefs. Those three dealt with the Trinity, the full divinity of Jesus, and the personhood of the Holy Spirit."<sup>45</sup>

Knight has also written:

"Ellen White was one of the very few among the earliest Adventist leaders who was not aggressively anti-Trinitarian. While that is true, it is also true that her early statements are not clear as to what she did believe. But after the 1888 General Conference session, with its emphasis on Christ and salvation in Him, she became explicitly clear on the Trinitarian viewpoint."<sup>46</sup>

Knight also says, "it was Ellen White who eventually directed the denomination to Bible study that ultimately led to affirmation of the Trinity, the full deity of Christ, and the personhood of the Holy Spirit."<sup>47</sup>

## DIFFICULTIES IN ASSESSING CONTEMPORARY ADVENTISM

Adventism has officially shored up some of its doctrines, such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ, to conform to Christian orthodoxy. However, there are some who differ with the denomination's official pronouncements. Knight notes:

"... it is also true that the denomination in the closing years of the twentieth century and the opening years of the twenty-first has witnessed a resurgence of anti-Trinitarianism and semi-Arianism on the basis that the earliest founders of the denomination held those views. As of 2002 the issue was becoming divisive in Adventism in many parts of the world. It should be noted, however, that the current movement is largely a dissident lay movement. The official position of the denomination and the vast majority of its clergy and laity is firmly Trinitarian."<sup>48</sup>

One thing that makes an evaluation of Adventism challenging is that there are at least four groups within Adventism. Samples observes:

"I see quite a bit of theological diversity within Seventh-day Adventism. In some ways it reminds me of present-day evangelicalism. One strand of Adventism appears quite traditional, another very liberal, and still another distinctly evangelical. There also seems to be a segment that is atheological in nature and reflects what I would call a cultural Adventism."<sup>49</sup>

The *traditional* Adventists would be those who view Ellen White's writings as being on a par with Scripture. They might hold to early Adventist beliefs, such as anti-Trinitarianism and semi-Arianism. They might hold to a view of salvation that regards it as a product of faith plus works, as opposed to the view of salvation by faith alone. They might also believe that Jesus had a sinful human nature, rather than a non-sinful human nature. This group of Adventists is clearly a cult.

The *liberal* Adventists are theologically liberal, at least in terms of Adventist theology. They might not believe all the unorthodox, or even the orthodox, doctrines held by Adventism (in relation to evangelical Christianity). Some may be true Christians.

The *evangelical* Adventists would be those who believe in the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. They do not view Ellen G. White as infallible, nor place her writings on a par with Scripture. They may still hold to some of the unusual theological beliefs of Adventism, such as conditional immortality and the annihilation of the wicked. They may or may not believe in the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment. There are Adventists within this group who are Christians.

The *cultural* Adventists would be those who perhaps were raised Adventists, and who hold to certain rules such as the dietary ones or the Saturday Sabbath, but who may or may not be genuine Christian believers.

These are not hard-and-fast classifications. There might be an evangelical, liberal Adventist. There might be a cultural Adventist who is also a traditionalist. These same four categories can also be found within historical Christian denominations.

Another factor that makes it difficult to assess Adventism is that there are leaders within it who differ with one another in print concerning theology. Walter Martin experienced this difficulty in trying to understand Adventism. In dialoging on *The John Ankerberg Show* with a Seventh-day Adventist leader concerning his beliefs, Martin said to William Johnson, "Brother, we've got a problem. The problem is, who speaks for you?"<sup>50</sup> In reply, Johnson said, "The [then 27, now 28] fundamental beliefs are the basic statement of the church."<sup>51</sup>

Elsewhere, in the same series of programs, Johnson stated:

"No other statements have the authority of the fundamental beliefs. These are our statements of

faith. This is what we expect people to affirm to before we accept them into the church."<sup>52</sup>

### DISTINCTIVE SDA BELIEFS

Some Adventist doctrines that are minor beliefs, and in some cases unique to themselves, are:

**Conditional Immortality and the Denial of Everlasting Hell.** One Adventist belief is the doctrine of "conditional immortality," the belief that man does not have an immortal soul. Instead, they teach that at the resurrection true believers will be granted immortality and unbelievers will be annihilated. The Bible does speak of individuals as "souls" (Genesis 2:7; Acts 7:14; 27:37). However, sometimes the Bible clearly speaks of the "soul" as something distinct *within* a person (e.g., Genesis 34:8; Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 13:3; Matthew 10:28; Luke 2:35; and 1 Peter 2:11). The Bible does teach of an everlasting hell for both Satan and unbelievers in Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 20:10-15; 21:8; and Daniel 12:2.

**Saturday Sabbath.** Another Adventist belief is that Christians must keep the Sabbath and observe it on Saturday. While there are denominations that teach Christians should keep the Sabbath, many teach a Sunday Sabbath, because Christ rose from the dead on Sunday and because the early Church celebrated Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection on that day. Adventism teaches that the Roman Catholic Church changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

Adventists may keep the Sabbath on Saturday if they wish. But they cannot insist that this is the only day that pleases God. Two Scriptures that refute Adventism's teaching on this are Romans 14<sup>53</sup> and Colossians 2:16-17.<sup>54</sup> The latter one says:

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

Additionally, their charge that the Roman Catholic Church changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday is

false, regardless of what the Catholic Church may claim. Roger Chambers wrote:

"The truth is, however, that the confusion of Sunday with the Sabbath is a late development in the history of Christianity. ... Sunday was never to the early church what the Sabbath was to the Jews. ... It was never, to the early church, the 'Christian Sabbath.'"<sup>55</sup>

Further, "The apostolic and early Christian fathers unanimously affirm first-day observance."<sup>56</sup> Following this, Chambers cites writings from as early as the second-century A.D. that support his statement.

Later, he stated:

"The charge that 'the pope changed the Sabbath' will not hold water. In the first place, the Sabbath was not changed; it was abandoned. In the second place, a careful study of Catholic dogma will reveal that the Roman church claims to have instituted a new day of worship *in that the original apostles did so*. It does not make sense for Sabbatarians to quote papal authority on 'Sabbath changing' when they believe almost nothing else claimed by the papacy."<sup>57</sup>

**Dietary Prohibitions.** Concerning diet, a Seventh-day Adventist source explains:

"...we steer clear of alcohol, tobacco in all its forms, recreational drugs, and caffeinated beverages. We also avoid using the flesh of animals which the Bible identifies as unclean. In fact, many Adventists have adopted a vegetarian diet."<sup>58</sup>

Seventh-day Adventism is biblically in error to dictate to its members in the areas of eating and drinking. The New Testament says very little about the believer's diet whereas Seventh-day Adventism emphasizes diet and restricts its members where God has left people free to choose.

In the Old Testament, God commanded Israel not to eat certain things (Leviticus 11). However, these

restrictions were never given to anyone except the Jews and were abolished under the New Covenant. Proof that these dietary laws were done away with can be seen in several New Testament passages, including:

“Thus He [Jesus] declared all foods clean” (Mark 7:19b, NASB).

Colossians 2:16-17, cited above, addresses dietary rules as well.

These passages make clear that Christians are not under religious dietary restrictions.

Paul wrote in Romans 14:2-3:

“For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.”

Paul allows that those who are weak in faith might feel constrained to eat only vegetables and that those who do not have those same convictions should not *despise* those who do. However, this Scripture also says that those who are vegetarians should not *judge* those who do not share their dietary habits.<sup>59</sup>

## UNIQUE SDA BELIEFS

There are three special themes in Adventism’s 28 fundamental beliefs that deserve mention:

“*The Great Controversy*.” This doctrine was something Ellen White championed and which she expanded upon throughout her life. It is White’s purported understanding of the conflict between Christ and Satan, from before human history through the elimination of evil from the universe at the end of time.

“*The Remnant [Church] and Its Mission*.”<sup>60</sup> Another important theme in Adventist theology is the perception that the group is the “remnant church” being prophesied of in such passages as Revelation 12:17 and 14:12. Adventism teaches that this is the reason the movement exists. God raised them up in these last days to finish what the Protestant Reformers began.<sup>61</sup> In the words of researcher

Kenneth Samples, the early Adventists saw themselves as “a special people, with a special message, for a special time!”<sup>62</sup>

The special proclamation that God has entrusted them to proclaim to the Church and the world is what they call “the three angels’ messages.” In the words of one of their sources, “The three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 reveal the proclamation of the remnant that will bring a full and final restoration of the gospel truth.”<sup>63</sup>

However, there are six angels mentioned in Revelation 14. The others are found in Revelation 14:14-20. Adventists identify themselves with the first three, but not the latter three.

“*Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary*”<sup>64</sup> (*The Investigative Judgment*). Fundamental belief 4 is called the investigative judgment. It teaches that Christ’s atonement on the cross was incomplete apart from the investigative judgment. The investigative judgment doctrine seems impossible to derive from the Scriptures using sound principles of biblical interpretation.

The only reason it is a key doctrine in Adventism is because White confirmed this doctrine with a vision she said she had. The foundation of this doctrine was a vision that Hiram Edson claimed he had while he and O.R.L. Crosier walked through a cornfield on the day after the Great Disappointment. Later, Crosier wrote an account of Edson’s vision. Two-and-a-half years after Edson’s vision, White wrote:

“The Lord shew me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the Sanctuary, and that it was his will, that Brother C. should write out the view which he gave us in the Day-Star, Extra, February 7, 1846. I feel fully authorized by the Lord, to recommend that Extra, to every saint.”<sup>65</sup>

Because White endorsed this doctrine, Adventists will not deny this teaching.

Adventists also cannot dispose of it because of its central place in their doctrine. In a book defending this doctrine, Adventist author Marvin Moore wrote:

“Ellen White said that ‘the correct understanding of [Christ’s] ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith.’ By Christ’s ‘ministration,’ she meant everything associated with His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, including an investigative judgment that began in 1844.”<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, the late Adventist historian Leroy Froom wrote:

“But neither in the early church (when and while the apostolic teachings were still intact), nor in the Reformation church (when a large portion of the apostolic positions had been recovered and restored), was the Heavenly Sanctuary truth taught, with its *Ministering Priest officiating in two distinct phases of that mediatorial service*, with the second phase comprising God’s great present Judgment Hour activities.”<sup>67</sup>

Froom’s assertion that this doctrine was *never* taught in the entire history of the Christian Church, from apostolic days to the present, while true, sits uncomfortably with Jude 3, which states that “the faith ... was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Likewise, Moore admitted:

“It unquestionably has been our most disputed doctrine. Throughout most of our history, people both from outside our church and from within have challenged this doctrine, and it has caused more defections from the [Seventh-day Adventist] church than have any of our other teachings.”<sup>68</sup>

He further stated:

“The biggest challenge our critics have thrown at us is that the Bible doesn’t support the Adventist teaching regarding the investigative judgment. Instead, they say, it’s based on the writings of Ellen White and the erroneous

biblical interpretations of our uneducated pioneers. ... [But] the church as a whole continues to insist that the investigative judgment doctrine is biblical."<sup>69</sup>

In his account of why he resigned as an Adventist pastor, Dale Ratzlaff documents his inability to find anyone who could give him clear scriptural support for this doctrine. The fact that neither he nor anyone else with whom he consulted was able to do so, led to him being forced to resign from his ministry as an Adventist pastor.<sup>70</sup> Near the end of his time as an Adventist pastor, an elder directed him to a professor at Loma Linda University. Ratzlaff met with this man, Dr. Graham Maxwell. Ratzlaff reported that in the course of their five-hour discussion, Maxwell didn't answer a single specific question he asked about this doctrine.<sup>71</sup> Ratzlaff recounted:

"As I pointed out the many problems associated with the 1844 investigative judgment, Dr. Maxwell, on several occasions, brought out the real, underlying reason why Adventists cannot reject the 1844 investigative judgment doctrine. 'If she [White] misled us here,' he said, 'then she probably misled us elsewhere.' To accept the obvious conclusion that the 1844 doctrine is without any biblical foundation would completely undermine the authority of Ellen White, causing the unique teachings of Adventism to fall like dominoes. For that reason Dr. Maxwell and many other leaders in the SDA church were not about to admit Adventist's 1844 sanctuary theology was error."<sup>72</sup>

Summarizing the portions of Scripture, when taken together, from which he believes the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment can be derived, Moore stated:

"Seventh-day Adventists bring together issues from several parts of the Bible to form this doctrine. There's the sanctuary in Leviticus, especially the Day of Atonement in chapter 16. In Daniel, there's the judgment scene in

chapter 7; there's the desecrated sanctuary in chapter 8, with its cleansing after 2,300 days/years; and there's the seventy weeks in chapter 9, from which we calculate that the 2,300 years ended in 1844. Then there's the book of Hebrews, which features the sanctuary/temple in heaven and Christ's ministry there. And finally, there's the year-day principle by which we interpret the time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation."<sup>73</sup>

The way that Adventism attempts to interpret these portions of Scripture and then cobble them together to form the doctrine of the investigative judgment is unnatural. However, because this doctrine never emerged from an inductive study of the Scriptures (exegesis), using sound principles of biblical interpretation; but instead, originated from Edson's vision, and Ellen White's subsequent endorsement of it, the Adventist church has tried to read this doctrine into Scripture (eisegesis) so that they can show "scriptural support" for the doctrine, when it has none.

### ELLEN G. WHITE ON THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT

Although White speaks of the investigative judgment elsewhere in her writings, this doctrine is the theme of Chapter 28 of her book, *The Great Controversy*,<sup>74</sup> titled, "Facing Life's Record."<sup>75</sup> Following are some selected quotes from that chapter:

"...in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period."<sup>76</sup>

"The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God."<sup>77</sup>

"Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act,

every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel. The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment."<sup>78</sup>

"As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. ... Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance."<sup>79</sup>

"All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."<sup>80</sup>

"At the time appointed for the judgment — the close of the 2300 days, in 1844 — began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny."<sup>81</sup>

"Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God."<sup>82</sup>

"Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have

their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or condemn."<sup>83</sup>

"No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine."<sup>84</sup>

"...all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart."<sup>85</sup>

"Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."<sup>86</sup>

On the one hand, White seems to assure the reader of being judged worthy of eternal life if he has put his faith in the Lord Jesus as Savior. On the other hand, she seems to teach that salvation, although begun by faith in Christ as Savior is, in the investigative judgment, only retained by keeping the Law and completely confessing and repenting of every single sin.

In these statements, two opposing ideas are asserted. Adventism teaches salvation by faith in Christ alone on one hand and on the other hand teaches that Christians are going to be judged by their keeping of the Law, their perfect confession, and repentance of sins. It is no wonder that Adventists arrive at different understandings of Adventism and that outsiders have different perceptions of Adventism.

The doctrine of the investigative judgment is certainly ambiguous and results in Adventists struggling over assurance of their salvation.

Space only permits three more examples of varied Seventh-day Adventist teaching on the investigative judgment. One author proclaimed:

"[Ellen White] said, 'When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and

He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit.' Putting it in the fewest possible words, she also said, 'When we do our best, He becomes our righteousness.'"<sup>87</sup>

Another author wrote:

"Works do not save us. They cannot save us and are not meant to save us. But that does not mean they have nothing to do with salvation. On the contrary, they are the proof, the evidence, that we have been saved. If we are truly converted, our works will testify to it, and we will have nothing to fear in the judgment. Some ask, How will I know if I have enough works to be saved? The answer is easy. You don't have enough works to be saved, and you never will. That is why we need Jesus covering us with His righteousness. All we can do is lean on Him, plead His merits on our behalf, and trust that He is a righteous, compassionate Judge who will judge us according to His infinite wisdom and mercy. What more do we need?"<sup>88</sup>

The latter part of the official Adventist statement of this doctrine reads:

"The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent."<sup>89</sup>

On the one hand, they seem to teach that faith in Jesus is all that is

necessary for salvation. On the other hand, they all mention some sort of works, such as "keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus," "doing our best," and "Works do not save us. ... But that does not mean they have nothing to do with salvation." Adventists cannot read such statements and have assurance of salvation. Marvin Moore has stated that this lack of assurance among Adventists has been problematic for both Adventists and their critics.<sup>90</sup>

## NOT JUST ANOTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION

An evaluation of Adventism must acknowledge that it is possible for an Adventist to be a true Christian believer. This doesn't mean that the theology of these Adventist believers is, therefore, biblically sound.

Seventh-day Adventism is a cult, based on several factors. First, the unbiblical doctrine of the investigative judgment contradicts the biblical doctrine of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. This false doctrine confuses Scriptures regarding the judgment of believers after death and after Christ's return with an unbiblical, contrived stage of judgment in-between the two comings of Christ.

The Scriptures are clear that there will be a future judgment by God of all people, both believers and unbelievers (Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16; Revelation 22:12). However, the Scriptures teach that the judgment of believers will not be a judgment of condemnation, but rather a judgment to see what, if any, reward the believer will receive from the Lord (Romans 14:9-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:5). However, the fact that believers will never face a judgment resulting in condemnation is clearly taught in Scriptures such as John 5:24; Romans 8:1; and John 3:18.

Although Adventism teaches that salvation is initially gained by placing faith in Christ as Savior, Adventists teach that it is subsequently maintained by keeping the Ten Commandments, especially the Sabbath. This is Galatianism, which Scripture condemns as a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-10; 2:21; 3:1-25; 4:21-5:14; Romans

7:1-6). Romans 7:6, for instance, is clear when it instructs Christians:

“But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (Romans 7:6, NASB).

Additionally, the churchwide dietary prohibitions are a huge red flag, considering 1 Timothy 4:1-5:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

Adventists’ esteem of Ellen G. White as a prophet of God and her writings as oracles of God is a cultish characteristic. Finally, even if they did not have all these marks of a cult, many of their doctrines seem deliberately strange — as if they developed them to be different from more usual expressions of Christianity.

While Seventh-day Adventism is a cult, it is not a cult to the same extent as some of the more obvious cults, such as Mormonism or the Watchtower Society.<sup>91</sup> Likewise, Kenneth Boa has stated:

“Thus, it would seem improper to classify [contemporary] Adventism in the same category with such cults as Mormonism, Christian Science, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Nevertheless, definite doctrinal problems and emphases remain which make it hard to view the Seventh-Day Adventists as just another branch of evangelical Christianity.”<sup>92</sup>

So whether one labels Adventism a full blown or marginal cult, neither

designation is much of an endorsement; nor can Adventism be sanctioned a healthy body of Christian belief.

### Endnotes:

1. For more about failed predictions of Christ’s Second Coming, see J. Greg Sheryl, “When in the World Will Jesus Return? The Follies and Perils of Date-Setting,” *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2010. Portions of this paragraph are taken from pg. 8 of that article.
2. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963, pg. 90. Also see Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985, pg. 415.
3. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pg. 89.
4. George R. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993, pp. 17-18.
5. *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 416.
6. *Anticipating the Advent*, op. cit., pg. 22.
7. Although there are other Adventist denominations that sprang from the Millerite movement, whenever we use the word “Adventist” for the rest of this article, we are referring only to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
8. *Ibid.*, ellipsis in original.
9. “Heavenly intelligences” as used here at least refers to angels; however, the indefiniteness of the term may refer to other unidentified beings.
10. The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005, pg. 347.
11. Adventism appears at least unclear, if not outright contradictory, in their teaching about Christ’s atonement being completed on the cross. On the one hand, they teach that, “the actual atoning death of our Lord took place at Calvary *once for all time* (Heb. 9:26-28; 10:10-14). On the cross the penalty for human sin was fully paid. Divine justice was satisfied ... The atonement, or reconciliation, was completed on the cross as foreshadowed by the sacrifices, and the penitent believer can trust in this finished work of our Lord” (*ibid.*, pg. 350, italic in original). However, as quoted above, they also teach that, “In 1844 ... [Jesus] entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry” (*ibid.*, pg. 347). Thus, it appears they may believe that Jesus paid the full penalty for man’s sin on the cross, but that there is another phase of His atonement — the

application of this payment to people — that He is currently accomplishing. But because they refer to this as a *second phase* of His atoning ministry, this implies that they regard Christ’s atonement on the cross as somehow incomplete.

12. *Anticipating the Advent*, op. cit., pg. 25. The King James Version of Daniel 8:14 reads, “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”
13. *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 417.
14. *Ibid.*, pg. 414, italic in original.
15. George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004, pp. ix, 211. Knight considers Joseph Bates to have been the real founder of SDA. He wrote, “without Bates there would be no Seventh-day Adventist Church. ... It is ... safe to say that the *real* founder of Seventh-day Adventism was Joseph Bates” (*ibid.*, pg. 210, italic in original).
16. *Anticipating the Advent*, op. cit., pg. 55.
17. Ken McFarland, *Your Friends, the Seventh-day Adventists*. Nampa, Idaho.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003, pg. 6.
18. Ellen G. White “to Bro. and Sis. Scott, July 6, 1863,” quoted in George R. Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006, pp. 61-62, ellipsis in original.
19. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, pg. 492, quoted by Dale Ratzlaff, *Truth Led Me Out*. Glendale, Ariz.: LAM Publications, LLC, 2008, pg. 97, note 17.
20. From a transcript of *The John Ankerberg Show* entitled, “Who Is Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?” Chattanooga, Tenn.: John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, 1985, pg. 1.
21. *Ibid.*, pg. 15. This statement is probably a paraphrase of the statement from Ellen White referenced in note 19 above.
22. *Ibid.* The SDA statement of fundamental beliefs numbered 22 statements from 1931-1979. Then “the 1980 General Conference session replaced it with a similar but more comprehensive summary in twenty-seven paragraphs, published under the title, ‘Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.’” This summary continued until 2005, when the General Conference session added a 28th article, which is their current (2012) number of fundamental beliefs. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pp. v-vi.
23. “The Dallas Statement” was the 1980 statement of the then 27 fundamental SDA beliefs adopted by the General Conference session held in Dallas, Texas.
24. *Truth Led Me Out*, op. cit., pg. 97.

25. This figure was accessed at: [www.adventist.org/world-church/facts-and-figures/index.html](http://www.adventist.org/world-church/facts-and-figures/index.html).
26. This figure was accessed at: [www.adventistdirectory.org/viewAdmField.aspx?AdmFieldID=NAD](http://www.adventistdirectory.org/viewAdmField.aspx?AdmFieldID=NAD). The North American Division includes more than simply the U.S. For the specific areas the North American Division covers, see: [www.adventistyearbook.org/ViewAdmField.aspx?AdmFieldID=NAD](http://www.adventistyearbook.org/ViewAdmField.aspx?AdmFieldID=NAD).
27. *Your Friends, the Seventh-day Adventists*, op. cit., pp. 25-27.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 24, italics in original.
30. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. viii; see also pg. v, where this same thought is expressed.
31. This statement regarding the authority of the 28 fundamental beliefs is borne out by the following statements made by an SDA leader, regarding his response to various questions being asked him one evening by those he regarded as critics of SDA: "Only the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs (at that time 27 in number; now 28) states correctly what the world Adventist Church believes. I repeated this line of defense over and over: 'Yes, you may find that statement in a book or magazine published at some time in our history. But it is *not* our official position. The 27 fundamental beliefs state that...' I was never more grateful for the fundamental beliefs than that night" (William G. Johnson, *Embrace the Impossible*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008, pg. 144, italic and ellipsis in original).
32. The structure of these lists and some of the actual items are taken from George R. Knight, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated edition. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2003, pp. 21-24. The original edition of this book was published in 1957. It is normally cited simply as *Questions on Doctrine* or QOD, and will be cited as *Questions on Doctrine* for the remainder of this article.
33. Peculiarly, SDA holds that Michael the archangel is a "title" of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike Jehovah's Witnesses, who also believe that Jesus is Michael the archangel, Adventists believe that Jesus is the one eternal God, and insist that "Michael" is simply a title for Him. In common with some Christians, they believe that Jesus is "the angel of the Lord" spoken of in certain Old Testament passages (e.g., Genesis 16:7-11; 21:17; 22:11, 15; Exodus 3:2; Numbers 22:22-35; Judges 2:1, 4; etc.).
34. Their belief that the Lord Jesus will return visibly is orthodox; however, some of their beliefs associated with His Second Coming are not biblical, such as their teaching that He will return after complet-
- ing in heaven the investigative judgment of professed believers.
35. "Heterodox" means, "Not in agreement with accepted beliefs, esp. church doctrine or dogma." It can also mean, "Holding unorthodox opinions." Both these definitions come from *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, s.v., "heterodox."
36. Kenneth Richard Samples, "Evangelical Reflections on Seventh-day Adventism: Yesterday and Today," pg. 1. Document accessed at: [http://qod.andrews.edu/docs/08\\_kenneth\\_samples.pdf](http://qod.andrews.edu/docs/08_kenneth_samples.pdf). This is a written presentation which Samples presented at an SDA convention in 2007 commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Adventist book, *Questions on Doctrine*.
37. Alan W. Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, pg. 7. Gomes elaborates upon this definition on pages 7-12. This book is the "introduction to the Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements" (*ibid.*, back cover), of which series Gomes was the general editor.
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 10. While these items that Gomes lists *are* central doctrines of the Christian faith, these are certainly not the *only* central doctrines of the Christian faith.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.
41. *Ibid.*
42. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1999, pg. xxi.
43. Arianism was an early Church heresy that taught that Christ was a created being. Theologian Millard J. Erickson explains that Arianism is, "A view of the person of Christ according to which he is the highest of the created beings and is thus appropriately referred to as god, but not *the* God" (Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001, pg. 16, s.v., "Arianism," italic in original). Arianism was condemned as heresy by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.
44. "Evangelical Reflections on Seventh-day Adventism: Yesterday and Today," op. cit., pg. 3.
45. George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000, pg. 110.
46. *Questions on Doctrine*, op. cit., pg. 46, note 9 (continued).
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46, note 9 (continued).
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 39, note 1.
49. "Evangelical Reflections on Seventh-day Adventism: Yesterday and Today," op. cit., pg. 4.
50. "Who Is Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?," pg. 12.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
53. See further, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pp. 470-472.
54. See further, *ibid.*, pp. 464-468.
55. Roger R. Chambers, *The Plain Truth About Armstrongism*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988, pp. 153-154.
56. *Ibid.*, pg. 155.
57. *Ibid.*, pg. 158, italic in original.
58. *Your Friends, the Seventh-day Adventists*, op. cit., pg. 18.
59. See further, Lorri MacGregor "Facts Seventh-day Adventists Won't Tell You." Saint Louis, Mo.: Personal Freedom Outreach, 2002, CD-0218.
60. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. 181.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 189-190.
62. Samples in Dale Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventism*. Glendale, Ariz.: LAM Publications, LLC, 2009, pg. viii.
63. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pg. 192.
64. *Ibid.*, pg. 347.
65. James White, Ellen G. White, and Joseph Bates, *A Word to the "Little Flock"*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1847, pg. 12.
66. Marvin Moore, *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010, pg. 12. His quotation of White, which is also on the back cover of his book, is from Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946, pg. 221.
67. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971, pg. 541, italics in the original.
68. *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*, op. cit., pg. 12.
69. *Ibid.*, italic in original.
70. *Truth Led Me Out*, op. cit., pg. 89. Although Ratzlaff mentions his inability to find scriptural support for the investigative judgment doctrine, in other places in the book (especially chapter 9, pp. 89-103) he recounts the circumstances leading up to and including his resignation.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 98.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98, italics in original.
73. *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*, op. cit., pg. 11. The "year-day" principle to which he refers is the belief that the "days" mentioned in some portions of the books of Daniel and Revelation actually refer to "years," rather than days.
74. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005. This edition of *The Great Controversy* is based on Ellen White's 1911 edition, rather than her earlier 1888 edition.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 479-491.
76. *Ibid.*, pg. 480.
77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*, pg. 482.  
79. *Ibid.*, pg. 483. She quotes Exodus 32:33 and Ezekiel 18:24 as support for these statements.  
80. *Ibid.*  
81. *Ibid.*, pg. 486.  
82. *Ibid.*  
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 486-487.  
84. *Ibid.*, pg. 487.  
85. *Ibid.*, pg. 490.  
86. *Ibid.*  
87. *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*,

op. cit., pg. 30. Moore cites both quotes from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006. The first quote is from Vol. 1, pg. 382; the second, from pg. 368.  
88. Clifford Goldstein, *False Balances*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992, pg. 178.  
89. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, op. cit., pp. 347-348.  
90. *The Case for the Investigative Judgment*,

op. cit., pp. 19-25. Moore, however, believes that the reason for this lack of assurance is an incorrect understanding of the doctrine; not that the doctrine itself promotes such uncertainty.  
91. See Ruth A. Tucker, *Another Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1989, pg. 93.  
92. Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions and the Occult*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1990, pg. 116.



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## EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

fulfilled with the Assyrian invasion in 721 B.C. and the devastation and deportation of the people of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 18:9-12). These facts have been established by history, archaeology, and a long line of qualified, godly commentators. Judgment was prophesied on Israel and fulfilled in Isaiah's day.

Isaiah, under God's inspiration, seemed interested in telling his audience to be sure that they really understand the message directed to them and them alone. In Isaiah 9:19, he said that "the land is burned up" — not just two large buildings. The territory of "Samaria" is mentioned in verse 9. Isaiah told of the internal struggles of "Manasseh and Ephraim" in verse 21. These were the tribes in Samaria and surrounding areas.

In verse 10, sycamores (plural) are mentioned. There happened to be a sycamore tree (singular) near the World Trade Center, and Cahn makes it fit into Isaiah 9:10. The sycamore roots of that one tree are preserved today in New York City. What Cahn misses is that not only are the many sycamores of the Northern Kingdom mentioned in Isaiah 9:10, but cedars (plural) in the same verse. Also there is the destruction of palm trees and bulrushes in verse 14, and the thickets of the forest going up in smoke in verse 18. There was no forest fire in downtown New York City on 9/11. Cahn's Scripture twisting does not work. He changes words from plural into singular to try to make them fit, but they do not. There is no hint in this passage of some secondary prophetic fulfillment or application.

Cahn says that 9/11 was a warning for America. But Isaiah 9 was not a warning. It was a prophecy of certain destruction of the Northern Kingdom. It was an announcement of irreversible judgment. Isaiah 9:17 is clear: "His anger is not turned away." It is again stated in verse 21. There is absolutely no parallel to New York on 9/11 as Cahn suggests.

The phrase "His hand is stretched out still," repeated three times (verses 12, 17, 21), meant God's hand was stretched out unrelentingly and irreversibly in judgment. The Hebrew device of stating something three times in a short space means continuously. God's anger would

continue against Israel until judgment was literally fulfilled and exhausted by the brutal Assyrian invaders. Israel's buildings were to be destroyed, bricks toppled, and the trees and forests devastated. Nothing in Isaiah 9 can support Cahn's imaginings. New York City was not annihilated on 9/11, much less New York State or the United States.

Further, simple logic along with Scripture tells us that the Lord would not be addressing genuine Christians about His certain wrath and their destruction. Romans 8:1 assures all true believers that they will not come into condemnation. First Thessalonians 5:9 assures believers that "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Isaiah 9:10 cannot be addressed to the unsaved of America because they are already under judgment, according to John 3:18-20. Isaiah 9:10 and following verses have only one recipient. The context and the outcome of the Assyrian invasion prove it to be the northern tribes of Israel.

Cahn's foundational error is a common one. That error is assuming that similarity means identity. This kind of thinking takes two automobiles, for instance a Cadillac Escalade and a Volkswagen Beetle and concludes that because each is an automobile, they are identical to one another. The price tag tells us a different story. Cahn would have us believe that because Isaiah 9 mentions sycamore trees, that equates to the single sycamore in Manhattan.

To some degree Cahn also attempts to embody the real context of Isaiah 9 in one of his YouTube videos. Here he turns the 9/11 hijackers into pseudo-Assyrians. He claims that because the ancient Assyrians spoke Akkadian and Akkadian became a basis for the Arabic language, it follows that there is a link between the hijackers and the Assyrians. However, a bit of homework disproves that.

The language of the Assyrians was called Assyro-Babylonian. It is the basis of all Semitic languages and is today extinct. All Middle Eastern peoples of Semitic origin owe their language to one degree or another to the Assyro-Babylonian language. Classical Arabic does, but not modern Arabic. Linguists are now crediting the alphabet system for all languages to the early Canaanites.

His premise that the hijackers are connected to the Assyrians fails at many points. For one thing, hordes of Assyrian soldiers were on the ground in 721 B.C. In New York City on 9/11 a few Muslim terrorists were in the air. Ancient Assyria occupied what is now Northern Iraq. None of the hijackers was from Iraq. Fifteen of them were Saudi Arabian citizens; and the rest from Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates. Osama bin Laden was from Saudi Arabia. None could be linked even remotely to Iraq or the Assyrians. Using Cahn's reasoning, one could even argue that the hijackers were Jews because Hebrew also owes its origins to the Assyro-Babylonian tongue. The dots just do not connect.

Cedars can grow to a height of 120 feet and can have a girth of 30 feet or more. There were and are cedar forests in Lebanon. The boast of the Israelites was a mockery of God's judgment. They were saying that even if God took them down in judgment, they would build bigger, better, and stronger. If God wiped out the sycamore trees, they would be replaced with cedars. They couldn't and didn't.

Cahn uses word play and turns things into what they are not. Remember that Isaiah 9:10 has the boast that when the sycamores (plural) are cut down they would be replaced with cedars (plural). Cahn's tree (singular) planted in St. Paul's Churchyard is called The Tree of Hope. It is not a cedar. It is a pine tree. Cedars are from the *cupressaceae* family, while pines are from the *pinaceae* family. St. Paul's has neither numerous sycamores nor numerous cedars. Even if one granted that a cedar tree is a distant cousin of a pine tree, it still would not square with Cahn's idea that a cedar is the same as a pine.

Cahn makes a big deal over the fact that unsaved politicians quoted Isaiah 9:10 after 9/11. All this shows is that Cahn can misinterpret Scripture as readily as a misguided, unsaved politician. Applying Scripture where and how one wants cuts both ways.

It would take a whole book to effectively deal with all of Cahn's so-called warnings to America. It would be wise for those Christians who place so much stock in Cahn and his book to investigate his personal history, academic background, and his view of America's founders and its history. Does he meet the demands of 1 Timothy 3?

This examination of a few of Cahn's foundational ideas shows them to be faulty. The dots he claims to connect were never there and that makes the rest of his book suspect and untrustworthy. It is like any building. If the foundation is rotted, the structure will not stand for very long (Psalm 11:3).

One can take a \$5, a \$10, or a \$20 bill and by folding it can make the images of the reverse side of the bills appear somewhat like the Twin Towers in various stages of burning and collapse. This is what Cahn does with the words of Isaiah 9. A little bit of bending and folding and it somewhat fits; a little anyway, if we use our imagination. The Towers are not really pictured on the bills, but the bills can be manipulated to look that way. What is not there can be made to look like it is.

Finally, Cahn did not dare list the harbinger or warning of Isaiah 9:15: "the prophet who teaches lies." Had he done so, he would have been addressing his publisher, *Charisma*, the many false prophets who have featured him on their shows, and the so-called apostolic and prophetic movement. The omission is telling.

The success of this kind of book shows people's lack of discernment. There are many clear warnings in the Bible about sin and repentance. We do not need convoluted schemes, pretend prophecies, fanciful novels, and make-believe secrets and mysteries to tell us about that.

—GRF

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## NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

its tax returns to avoid disclosure of his affiliation with TBN while Matthew Crouch was receiving money from a film company through TBN," the newspaper reported.

Following repeated requests for Koper's declaration, *The Orange County Register* divided the entire 180-page document into six parts and provided links to all the sections on its Web site. The documents include financial reports and receipts, personal and confidential memos between staff, and e-mails. The O.C. Watchdog reports that its staff "got hold of the records during the 24-hour window when they were public." The newspaper stated, "Trinity asked that they be sealed until a hearing can be determined whether they are stolen or forgeries." In a subsequent article the newspaper also reported that TBN told them that the documents being quoted "were stolen and may have been altered."

In addition to local authorities, Koper has given her documents to the Internal Revenue Service and says she is responding to their inquiries. However, neither the Orange County District Attorney's office nor the IRS is commenting.

Koper said, "God uses people to different ends, and he's using me to expose this. He doesn't want the money-changers in his house anymore. God is using me to clean house and get TBN into the hands of someone who will make sure it's run properly." TBN's attorney, Colby May, countered with, "I can only say that under no circumstance is her 'decision' an effort 'to do the right thing.'"

Koper's father, Paul Crouch Jr. — the namesake of TBN's founder — told *The New York Times* "that getting caught in the crossfire between his daughter and his parents and brother is one of the hardest things he has ever had to endure."

If the accounts of TBN's errant financial practices weren't bad enough, the ordeal got worse in June.

Koper's younger sister, Carra Crouch, dropped her own bombshell with the revelation that when she was 13 years old, she was drugged and raped by a TBN employee. Crouch, now 19, also maintains that the incident was dismissed by family members. Her grandmother, Jan, is reported to have told her it was "her fault." Crouch said also her second cousin, John Casoria, an attorney for TBN, stated "he didn't believe her" and that "he further believed she was already sexually active 'so it did not really matter' and he 'believed she may have propositioned him,'" the O.C. Watchdog reported. Crouch filed a lawsuit June 18.

The incident allegedly took place in 2006, when Crouch accompanied her grandmother, Jan, to Atlanta for the network's spring fund-raising telethon. Crouch said a 30-year-old TBN employee joined her in her hotel room, where he forced her to drink wine in an effort to get her drunk. She says he later gave her a glass of water and after drinking it, she passed out. She maintains the glass of water contained a date rape drug that caused her to pass out. The following morning, she alleges, she awoke with the man lying next to her, found blood on the bed sheets, and said she experienced, "severe pain and soreness in her body in places which indicated she had been molested and raped."

TBN officials say they are "stunned to learn of the latest allegations being made by Carra, coming more than six years after her initial report" and that "Ms. Crouch's allegations are completely at odds with what she told her mother." However, according to the law suit, TBN fired the man accused of the assault. The *Register* report revealed, "Casoria, TBN's in-house attorney, fired him over the telephone, saying Trinity had gathered enough evidence to terminate him with cause, that the evidence was 'most probably sufficient to bring criminal charges' against him, and that Trinity would not disclose the evidence to the police if he would not file for unemployment, worker's compensation or an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission claim, the suit alleges."

Crouch's lawyer is her brother-in-law, Michael Koper.

—MKG

## HINN RECONCILES WITH FORMER WIFE

During his "Miracle Crusade" held last May in New York, healing evangelist Benny Hinn announced that he and his ex-wife were reconciling with plans to remarry. In February 2010, Hinn's wife, Suzanne, filed a petition for divorce citing irreconcilable differences. The divorce ended a 30-year marriage.

In a statement posted on his ministry's Web site, Hinn admitted, "Our marriage died for two reasons. One, I, Benny Hinn, was married to the ministry, not realizing it

was killing my marriage. And two, Suzanne started taking certain prescription medications to help her cope with some of her personal struggles. She became dependant [sic] on those for nearly 15 years, and those medications made her behave erratically at times." Hinn confessed to further delinquency as a Christian husband saying, "I did not know what kinds of medicine she was taking or realize what they were doing to her."

In a subsequent Web posting, Hinn revealed, "After our marriage ended, Suzanne decided that she needed professional help to help to gain freedom from her chemical dependence and checked herself into the Betty Ford Center in early 2010. And for three and a half months she underwent exhaustive treatment. Today she is totally set free from the need for these medications — she is completely whole — and for that I give the Lord Jesus the praise." Critics of Hinn underscore the paradox of Suzanne's treatment, namely that the nucleus of Hinn's ministry is a marketing of divine healing and supernatural deliverance from sickness, disease, and addictions.

According to the "Program & Pricing Information" listed on the Betty Ford Center Web site, the current inpatient/residential day treatment for a 90-day stay is \$55,000.

In June, Hinn and Suzanne took to the airwaves to further detail their reconciliation on various broadcasts of Hinn's *This Is Your Day*. The couple also used the recent events as an opportunity to raise funds for the ministry. "The last 3 years of our life has been so painful. ... The ministry also suffered. Not only did our family suffer, but the ministry suffered because when you go through divorce your family breaks up and the ministry suffers, of course. ... Now precious saints not only pray with us but please do all you can to put the ministry back on its feet. ... whatever God puts on your heart to send a gift to just help us," Hinn said on his video post.

The Hinns have set Friday, Oct. 28, as the date for their remarriage. The announcement took place during a "public meeting" attended by approximately 600 people on June 25 at Calvary Assembly in Winter Park, Fla. The fall wedding will also take place there. Calvary Assembly is noteworthy in that it was the site of the Hinns' first marriage in 1979. At that time, Suzanne's father, the Rev. Roy Harthern, was the pastor. He served Calvary Assembly in that role from 1970 until 1981. Foursquare pastor Jack Hayford, who has "been overseeing the restoration" of the couple, will perform the ceremony.

Just days following Hinn and his former wife's initial television celebratory announcement of the "healing" of their marriage and family, their son, Joshua, was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol. Joshua Hinn, 21, was arrested by the Tarpon Springs, Fla., police during the early morning hours of June 14. He posted a \$500 bond and was released.

—MKG



# Books in Review

## WANDERING STARS

by Keith Gibson

Solid Ground Christian Books, 306 pages, \$25.00

If I could only own one book on the history, heresies, and aberrations of the New Apostolic and Prophetic Movement, it would have to be this one because it is so comprehensive. Gibson produces an incredible amount of material and information from firsthand sources and from the writings and public statements of these heretical teachers themselves. Their own words condemn them.

What Gibson exposes is a group of false teachers who are presenting an imaginary and fictitious portrait of God, Christ, the Gospel, and the Christian life; and who end up with a diminished God, and a diminished Bible.

Interesting, too, is the fact that those in the “prophetic” movement try to use Wayne Grudem’s writings to sanction the idea of fallible prophecies. Gibson, in places, uses the doctrinal sections of Grudem’s writings like a sledge hammer to pulverize the New Apostles and their unbiblical views. At other times, he uses the scalpel of the Word to dissect their awful heresies and pretensions. What they try to present is a mutant and unrecognizable faux Christianity and Gibson will have none of it.

Chapter titles of the book offer the flavor and direction of the author. Chapters like “Did Jesus Fail?” and “The Dumbing Down of the Church” and “A New Doctrine a Day Keeps the Truth Away” show us exactly where the false teachers are taking us. Their concept of God as a limited being and His dependence on them is atrocious. Their statements on this are jarring and repugnant.

Gibson shows as well the origins of many of the imaginary doctrines put forth by the New Apostolic Reformation, and names names without hesitation. No one is given cover. Truth, after all, exposes.

I found that some of the words of the new prophets quoted by Gibson are so shocking, so unbelievable, so clearly unbiblical, there can be no doubt or hesitation that these “wandering stars” are functioning purely out of their own evil imagination and in accord with their own delusions. They are creating vast numbers of new doctrines never heard of or even thought of before, which

are attempting to make Christianity totally unrecognizable. They have created some kind of spiritualized Frankenstein monster and are trying to say it is the new Christianity. Those who know Scripture understand that the new prophets and apostles are also patching together old destructive heresies: the most recent being the so-called Latter Rain Movement.

In his chapter entitled “Jesus: Your Personal Boyfriend,” Gibson wades into the evil fruit produced by what is called the “Bride Paradigm” pushed by so many of the false teachers. This has been described in many ways such as “the lovesick Jesus” or “the boyfriend Jesus” or “Jesus with a ravished heart.” These fantasies are pushed to such extremes and to the point of even sexual suggestiveness that they are not only disturbing, but also raunchy, disgusting, and highly objectionable to any reasoning and reasonable person. How, when, and where these ideas originated is researched by Gibson as he thoroughly takes apart the false idea of making the “bride of Christ” (which is a corporate metaphor for the Church and not individuals) into some kind of over literalized, romanticized, and sexualized concept for individuals. The “bride” concept stresses commitment and submission, and is but one of many figures and metaphors to describe God’s people with each one addressing a different aspect of the Christian life.

If there is one area that could buttress this book even more it would be the addition of an index for easy retrievability. A suggestion for the readers would be to create one’s own index inside the clean back cover listing names and pages for retrieval’s sake. It would be a very beneficial investment of time.

Any small objection that a critical reader could find in the book would not overcome the relentless documentation, massive proofs, and clear reasoning that Gibson levels against every fictitious teaching and argument put forth by the new heretics. If one is serious about apologetics and confronting error, this book will provide an arsenal that really cannot be refuted. It is not just polemics, but a careful presenting of what the Bible says in contrast to the error. Get it — digest it — use it. This is the definitive handbook on the dribble of C. Peter Wagner, Mike Bickle, Rick Joyner, Paul Cain, and the entire coterie and silly-club of self-appointed super-prophets, miracle workers, and pseudo-apostles. In the bright light of the Bible, these wandering self-proclaimed “stars” simply fizzle, crash, and burn.

—GRF

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