

this I did wrong.”<sup>7</sup> Who can say that Mrs. White did not yield upon other occasions to the pressure of circumstances or opinions in exercising her so-called “gift of prophecy”?

Shouldn't every **SDA** be honest enough to admit as plainly as did Mrs. White that she was fallible? Doctrine cannot be established on her authority, but must be based in Scripture; and her works must be tested by God's Word. Any **SDA** who confesses this and dispenses with the proof texts from Mrs. White shows that he in truth holds *the Bible alone* to be infallible and sufficient in all matters of faith and practice.

**Redemption**—While **SDA** claim that Jesus made a complete atonement at Calvary, they stress the difference between Christ's completed work and its application to individuals.

Most decidedly the all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Jesus our Lord was offered and completed on the cross of Calvary. This was done for all mankind (*1 John 2:2*). But this sacrificial work will actually benefit human hearts only as we surrender our lives to God and experience the miracle of the new birth. In this experience Jesus our High Priest applies to us the benefits of his atoning sacrifice. Our sins are forgiven, we become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and the peace of God dwells in our hearts.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly this is an evangelical position as stated. If, however, the application of the atonement's saving benefits depend upon some *additional* work of Christ, such as the alleged “cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary” in 1844, it raises the issue of the completeness of Christ's work at Calvary.

How did their teaching of the **investigative judgment** in the heavenly sanctuary originate? The **SDA** interpreted the Old Testament day of atonement typologically (*Lev 16:20-28; 23:29-30*). Their interpretations of events on that day became their basis of doctrine, rather than explicit Scriptural teaching.<sup>9</sup> How this developed is a story in itself.

The **SDA** arose from the preaching of William Miller, a Baptist. In 1844, because of his prediction of the end of the world, a flurry of excitement ended in great disappointment. Miller had found a basis for predicting Christ's return in Daniel 8:14. The 2300 days until the *cleansing of the sanctuary* were taken to be 2300 years. Starting at 457 BC, when Artaxerxes decreed the Israelites could rebuild their ruined capital city, the period ended in 1844. But Jesus did not return.

On October 23, 1844, the day following the scheduled return of Christ, a Millerite named Hiram Edson walked alone through a cornfield, when,

suddenly there burst upon his mind the thought that there were two phases to Christ's ministry in heaven, just as in the earthly sanctuary of old...He [Christ] for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that [heavenly] sanctuary to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth.<sup>10</sup>

But what in the heavenly sanctuary needed cleansing? Mrs. White wrote, “Sin was not canceled by the blood of the victim. A means was thus provided by which it was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood the sinner...was not yet entirely released from the condemnation of the law.”<sup>11</sup>

Since the record of good and evil deeds still stands in heaven, the authors of *Questions on Doctrine* admit, “Acceptance of Christ at conversion does not seal a person's destiny.”<sup>12</sup>

Pardon from all sin as a benefit of Christ's atonement, according to **SDA**, is not received upon our trusting in Jesus Christ. Justification before God himself in the holy of holies awaits *another* work of Christ, his **investigative judgment**. There, even the believer may lose his salvation.

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>13</sup>

On what basis do men stand or fall in this investigative judgment?—not upon their union with Christ, not upon their new birth by the Spirit, not upon propitiation by Jesus' blood—“**The law of God** is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment.”<sup>14</sup> “It is clear that we must continue our allegiance throughout life if we expect Christ to represent us in the judgment.”<sup>15</sup>

Quite the contrary, the Bible explains that it is precisely because no sinner could keep the law that we need an advocate in heaven. “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (*1 John 2:1*). So long as the outcome of the investigative judgment is determined, not by faith, *but by law-keeping*, **SDA** cannot consistently say they regard the blood of Christ as the sole ground for salvation. Evangelicals must confront **SDA**, not so much with their error in timing divine judgment or their literalistic concept of the heavenly sanctuary or the unwise practice of basing a major doctrine on an Old Testament type alone, but with their plain contradiction of the scriptural truth of **justification by faith**. That involves complete pardon from all sin and the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness, so the believer in Christ need never fear judgment or condemnation—“He that believeth on him *is not condemned*...There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit...through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are *justified from all things* from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (*John 3:18; Rom 8:1; Acts 13:38, 39*). In this context the “law of Moses” is not distinct from, but includes the Ten Commandments.

**SDA** need to learn the glorious truth that “man is justified by faith *without the deeds of the law*” (*Rom 3:28; 4:4-6; Eph 2:8, 9; Gal 2:16; Titus 3:5*). Whatever Daniel 8:14 may mean, it cannot overthrow the foundational teaching throughout Scripture that “the just shall live by faith” in Christ's complete atoning work, not in their ability to keep the law.

**Faith Alone**—Many **SDA** statements relate “works” to “faith” in an orthodox manner. Their official position states:

Salvation is not now, and has never been, by law or works; salvation is only by the grace of Christ... Nothing men can do, or have done, can in any way merit salvation. While works

are not a means of salvation, good works are the inevitable result of salvation... This relationship and sequence is imperative, but is often misunderstood or reversed.<sup>16</sup>

Even as the fruit of faith, however, **SDA** do not expect believers to keep all the varied commands of the Old Testament.

The ceremonial law... as distinct from the moral law of God in the Ten Commandments, was but a shadow of Christ's work to come. Since his crucifixion the ceremonial law has been done away. It is carnal and enslaves anyone who attempts to keep it. But the Ten Commandments are not abolished. They are spiritual and bless with liberty the one who keeps them.<sup>17</sup>

How do the **SDA**, consistent with their own view, advocate Old Testament **dietary requirements**? Some **SDA** declare their freedom from them as legal taboos, but adhere to the distinction between clean and unclean animals prior to Moses, and keep them as a health program.<sup>18</sup> However, in response to a letter of inquiry, the **SDA** published a popular booklet that teaches something quite different:

As long as Isaiah 66:15-17 is in this Book, how dare I tell you it doesn't make any difference whether or not you eat swine's flesh and other unclean foods?... It would be much easier for me to say, “Go ahead and eat as you please; you need not worry about those things any more.” But God says those who are eating unclean things when he comes will be destroyed. Wouldn't you rather I put it plainly so that you'll not be deceived and be destroyed at our Lord's coming?<sup>19</sup>

Threats like this totally oppose the gospel—“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast” (*Eph 2:8-9*).

The same confusion exist with respect to **the Ten Commandments**. On one page of the same booklet, it says, “We keep the law of God because we are saved, not because we can save ourselves by law-keeping.” But on another page, it says, “Everywhere the Bible stresses the imperativeness of obedience if one would be saved.” And it says in a concluding section captioned *Standard of Judgment*,

The best summary of the requirements for salvation is found in the counsel Jesus gave the rich young nobleman (*Matt 19:16-21*), “If thou wilt enter into life, **(1)** keep the commandments... and **(2)** follow me.” There is no other hope of salvation. By the standard of God's holy law we shall be judged.<sup>20</sup>

No man has ever kept the law. It serves not to save, but to show men how desperately they need to be saved. The law speaks “that all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (*Rom 3:19-20*). By quoting the commandments Jesus sought to show the rich young ruler his need of “righteousness without the law... even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe” (*Rom 3:21-22*).

The acid test for the **SDA** view on the law is the doctrine of **the sabbath**. From the creation to the end times, they teach that the fourth commandment is part of “God's unchanging moral law.” They claim that Roman Catholic papal authority changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday; and

the reformation is not complete because Protestantism worships not on the seventh day. In the end times now upon us, though, they say the truth is being restored; and those who receive this light and conviction are responsible for obedience to this command. They affirm that as the final great religious crisis breaks upon mankind, papal power will head up forces in opposition to God, requiring first-day worship (*Dan 7:25; Rev 13:16-17*) as the mark of the beast. The day of worship will be a worldwide test of loyalty to Christ or antichrist.<sup>21</sup>

**SDA** say that those who do not now see the obligation of the sabbath are not punished, but in the future crisis Sunday worship will be sufficient grounds for condemnation. Then all who keep “the commandments of God” (*Rev 12:17*) will join “the remnant church” (**SDA**) in worshipping on Saturday. Unquestionably salvation in the future is by faith *and* Saturday worship, by grace *and* law-keeping; while at present God overlooks Sunday worshippers' ignorance and committing of gross sin, and does not execute the deserved penalty for flaunting his commandment. All evangelicals are still viewed as daughters of Babylon; they bear the mark of the beast.

**SDA** sabbath teaching, though, does not hold up. Nowhere does the New Testament reaffirm the fourth commandment, although it repeats the other nine. As a matter of fact, whoever makes sabbath days a test of fellowship disobeys the New Testament. And in the biblical context weekly sabbaths are not excluded (*Col 2:13-17; Gal 4:9-11; Rom 13:8-10; 14:4-6, 10, 12, 13*).

Under the New Covenant there are no holy places or holy days—only holy people, who are the Temple of God (*Eph 2:21, 22; John 4:19-24; 1 Peter 2:5, 9*). Paul teaches that days and food are not an issue in Messiah's kingdom (*Rom 14:17*). Christians are free to observe or not observe days as unto the Lord. One option in Christ is “to esteem every day alike” (*Rom 14:5*). Each person is to be persuaded in his own mind in such matters. Believers are not free to judge each other in this regard (*1/10*), as **SDA** have clearly done by asserting that those who do not keep the seventh-day sabbath are being disloyal to God. Now, if there is a day that must be observed or *sin* is committed, how could Paul allow for some brethren to regard every day the same? Under the New Covenant there is no reason to believe that the body of Christ can incur sin by meeting on the “*wrong*” day. The brethren must gather together, but they are free to work out the details in light of their New Covenant privileges and responsibilities as priests. The New Testament puts no emphasis on keeping a day of worship. Rather, we are encouraged to be our brother's keeper seven days a week.

The *ceremonial* nature of *the sabbath* is clearly seen here: “Have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple *profane the sabbath*, and are **blameless**?” (*Matt 12:5*). If the sabbath is a “moral” command, as the **SDA** teach, like stealing or adultery, how could it be violated without punishment? Could any of the other nine commandments be transgressed without sin being committed? Doesn't this show conclusively that the sabbath is different from the other nine? The priests worked on every sabbath and did so

without sinning. Clearly, the sabbath was ceremonial. The New Covenant Scriptures refer to the sabbath as a “**shadow**,” and Christ as the fulfilling “**reality**.” Paul made it plain—the “sabbath day” was “a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (*Col 2:16,17 NIV*). If a *type* and *shadow* is fulfilled in a *person*, why would you continue to focus on the shadow? Lambs were slaughtered under the old covenant. Once the fulfillment, Jesus, came and offered himself, why would we keep on killing animals? Once the reality comes, the type/shadow is discontinued. Why not apply this reasoning to the seventh-day sabbath? The **sabbath rest** pictured God’s finished, completed work, initially at *creation*, then again with salvation by faith in Christ. The author to the Hebrews used this sabbath analogy showing that believers enter into the reality of God’s rest, pictured by the sabbath. As a result, the believer “*has ceased from his own works*, as God did from his” (*Heb 4:10*). Our “rest” is found in Christ (*Mat 11:28*).

The *moral* standards in the other nine commandments of worshipping other gods and idols, taking God’s name in vain, dishonoring parents, murdering, committing adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting remain in effect because they reflect God’s very nature and as such are timeless. The expression of these moral standards *in the form of* the Ten Commandments, however, was not timeless. Paul stated that Jesus took this “written code, with its regulations” and “nailed it to the cross” (*Col 2:14 NIV*). The result could not be clearer. His “therefore” in verse 16 is based on the fact that Christ canceled the debt—all those Old Testament regulations. “Therefore,” he concludes, “do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or a sabbath day.” Those regulations were abolished.

There is noticeably a specific chronological progression here from yearly to monthly to weekly. The festivals were yearly, the new moons were monthly, and the sabbaths were weekly. To suggest, as **SDA** do, that “sabbath day” refers only to *annual* sabbath days would break up Paul’s clear Jewish division of time. Also, the Hebrew for sabbath (*shabbath*), the equivalent of the Greek *sabbaton* which Paul uses in writing to the Colossians, occurs about 100 times in the Old Testament and refers without exception to the *weekly* sabbath. By this, Paul clearly taught his converts they had no obligation to observe the seventh-day sabbath of the Old Testament.

Considering the centuries of tradition in which the Jewish writers of the New Testament were saturated, it is remarkable that they so emphasized **the first day of the week**. On the first day Jesus rose from the dead (*John 20:1*). He appeared to the ten disciples on that same day (*John 20:19*). One week later he appeared to the eleven disciples (*John 20:26*). The promised Pentecostal coming of the Holy Spirit occurred on Sunday (*Lev 23:16*). That significant Sunday after the first message proclaiming Christ’s death and resurrection, 3000 received the word, were baptized and added to the church (*Acts 2*). At Troas the Christians assembled for worship the first day of the week (*Acts 20:6-7*). And on the first day of the week the Corinthians made their contributions (*1 Cor 16:2*).

Sunday worship did not originate with the Pope three centuries after Christ, as **SDA** claim. It was already in the New Testament and was recognized by writers shortly thereafter. References to first-day worship may be found in the writings of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (*AD 110*); Justin Martyr (*AD 100-165*); Barnabas (*AD 120-150*); Irenaeus (*AD 178*); Bardaisan (*AD 154*); Tertullian (*AD 200*); Origen (*AD 225*); Cyprian (*AD 200-258*); Peter of Alexandria (*AD 300*); and Eusebius (*AD 315*).<sup>22</sup>

These historical facts undermine the whole **SDA** interpretation of first-day worship as the mark of the beast. Salvation never has been nor ever will be conditioned upon seventh-day worship. Nowhere do we read, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *and keep the seventh day* and thou shalt be saved.” But repeatedly we read, “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (*Gal 3:21-22*).

However commendable a law may be, if *added to faith*, it ruins God’s way of salvation. Adding “works” of any kind to faith destroys the very essence of grace. The Bible says, “If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (*Rom 11:6*). These principles are mutually exclusive because works receive a merited reward but grace is poured out upon those who are undeserving. “Now to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of grace, but *of debt*. But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (*Rom 4:4,5*). Grace is unmerited favor, the free gift of God. The **SDA**’s attempt to combine works and faith reveals a misunderstanding of both.

Justification is *by faith alone*; it is specifically said to be “**without works**.” In fact, faith must be alone or it’s not “faith” in the biblical sense of the word. The very idea of “believing on Christ” means that we trust him as the One who finished the “work” of salvation—there’s nothing left for us to do! “But to him that *worketh not*,” Paul says, “*but believeth*... Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness *without works*” (*Rom 4:5,6*). Faith and works here exclude one another. When the “Judaizers” of Galatia tried to teach justification by “faith *plus* circumcision,” Paul condemned them as “false brethren,” teaching “another gospel” (a false gospel), and uttered the strongest of curses upon them (*Gal 1:6-9; 5:1-4*). The Bible teaches that to *add* any “works” to “faith” is to believe in “salvation by works” and to place oneself under a curse.

The very idea of “believing in Christ” involves giving up entirely on all of our own “doing” and ability. Justifying faith, in its very essence, is reliance upon another. It’s the attitude of one who has given up all hope of anything virtuous he can ever do to merit in any way his acceptance with God—be it law-keeping, sabbath-keeping, or whatever. The sinner who trusts in Christ is like the poor swimmer who finally realizes

that left to his own efforts he’ll drown, ceases to struggle against the lifeguard, and completely relaxes in his care. Whoever claims that faith is just the beginning of salvation, and that you must do this and that, struggling to keep afloat the rest of your life, has not trusted in Christ.

Our Lord gives a fine illustration of this when he explains saving faith in terms of the serpent in the wilderness (*John 3:14,15; Num 21:4-9*). Just as the serpent was lifted up by Moses that men might look upon it and be saved, so Jesus would be lifted up on the cross that whosoever believes (“looks”) upon him might have eternal life. How were men saved in relation to the serpent? by “looking plus works”? by “looking plus law-keeping”? by “looking plus sabbath-keeping”? **No! by “looking” alone!** “When he looketh upon it, he shall live” (*Num 21:8*). And since faith is the gaze of the soul upon Christ, it is impossible to exercise biblical faith and at the same time be looking to ourselves and our obedience. Those who put confidence in anything but Christ—any religious duty at all—are still trusting in their own works and must surely perish.

**Conclusion**—The error of the **SDA** resembles that of the Galatians. Legalistic teachers came in and perverted the gospel (*Gal 1:7*) by adding law-keeping for one to be saved. Paul asked: How can you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews (*2:14*)? **SDA** under an influence beyond Scripture (Mrs. White) seem similarly to pervert the gospel by asking Gentiles to live on the sabbath like the Jews. Paul taught that the Mosaic law was like a tutor, a schoolmaster “to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (*Gal 3:24,25*).

Paul was clear that a person is not made righteous by any works of law, but through faith in Christ (*2:16*). He then argued that if righteousness came by the law, Christ died in vain (*2:21*), and that anyone who thought he could be saved by the law, if he did not obey all the laws, was cursed (*3:10*). Christ’s death does not benefit those who depend on circumcision or sabbath-keeping (*5:2*). The children of God boast in the cross of Christ alone (*6:14*). What counts is not Saturday-keeping or Sunday-keeping, but a new creation (*6:15*).

If the **SDA** persists in defending Mrs. White’s infallibility, the investigative judgment and the necessity of Old Testament diet and sabbath-keeping, they choose for themselves the Galatian heresy, and are under “the curse of the law” (*3:10*), and are guilty of preaching “another gospel” (*1:6-9*). □

#### References:

- [1] *Questions on Doctrine*, (1957) 11, (2003) 5 [2] *Ibid.*, 28/26 [3] *Bible Reading for the Home Circle* (1931) 189-194 [4] *Questions*, (1957) 93, (2003) 82 [5] *Ibid.*, 93/82 [6] Walter R. Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*, 100-104 [7] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies I*, 563, cited by Martin, 107 [8] *Questions*, (1957) 350, (2003) 280-281 [9] *Ibid.*, 362-364/288-290 [10] Leroy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (1954) IV, 661 [11] White, *The Great Controversy* (1911) 420, (2002) 234 [12] *Questions*, (1957) 420, (2003) 334 [13] White, *op. cit.*, 483/271 [14] *Ibid.*, 482/270 [15] *Questions*, (1957) 442, (2003) 349 [16] *Ibid.*, 141/121 [17] *Ibid.*, 121-134/105-116 [18] *Ibid.*, 624/486 [19] Fordyce W. Detamore, *Just What Do You Believe About Your Church?*, 22-23 [20] *Ibid.*, 32-34 [21] *Questions*, 149-185/129-158 [22] Martin, *The Truth*, 152-153

When the question is posed to Seventh-day Adventists (**SDA**), “Do you base your teachings on revelations or sacred writings other than the Bible?” they usually answer by presenting one of their “Fundamental Beliefs” from their official denominational teaching, *Questions on Doctrine*, which states, “that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments given of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of his will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice.”<sup>1</sup> And then they add, “We believe that all theological beliefs must be measured by the living Word, judged by its truth, and whatsoever is unable to pass this test, or is found to be out of harmony with its message, is to be rejected.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite these strong statements affirming the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture by **SDA**, they are clearly guilty of a contradiction by claiming that the writings of their founder, **Ellen G. White**, are “*inspired*.” They esteem her as one with the gift of prophecy (*Eph 4:11*), who gave “testimonies” as did the prophets throughout the Old Testament (*Rev 19:10*),<sup>3</sup> and entitled one of her works, *Testimonies*. Her writings are held in “highest esteem” because, they say, “the Holy Spirit opened to her mind important events and called her to give certain instructions for these last days.” Consequently, “we as a denomination accept them as *inspired counsels* from the Lord. But we have never equated them with Scripture.”<sup>4</sup>

If Mrs. White’s writings are not equivalent to Scripture, why are both said to be “*inspired*”? Until this confusion is cleared up in their statements about inspiration it is difficult to understand without qualification their claim that “we do not regard the writings of Ellen G. White as an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture...in the same sense as the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>5</sup> To regard Mrs. White as God’s single spokesperson for the end times is to undermine the ultimate authority of the Bible. If we differ with Mrs. White do we necessarily differ with God? In order to help **SDA** more clearly to distinguish Mrs. White from the biblical prophets and thus avoid *cultism*, we ask: Did Mrs. White err at any point theologically or in ethical and personal life, or was she inerrant in all her teachings, pronouncements and ethics?

The evidence does not support Mrs. White’s infallibility. It is a documented fact that she was guilty of *plagiarism*. In parallel columns Walter R. Martin lists passages from Mrs. White and from Conybeare and Howson’s *The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul*, J. A. Wylie’s *History of the Waldenses*, and D’Aubigne’s *History of the Reformation*.<sup>6</sup> Then, on Mrs. White’s own authority it may be shown that she erred, even in her “*inspired*” *Testimonies*. She admitted, “Under these circumstances I yielded my judgment to that of others and wrote what appeared in Number Eleven in regard to the Health Institute, being unable to give all that I had seen. In