

The Undenomination

An Examination of Seventh-Day Adventism

Since the time of the Reformation in the 1500's, the church has been divided many times into what we call denominations. A denomination, according to Noah Webster, is a class, society or collection of individuals, called by the same name. A Christian denomination is a religious organization in which a number of local congregations are united in a single legal and administrative body.¹ Denominations can be large or small. For example, the United Methodist Church is a denomination which has over 36,000 individual member congregations throughout the United States while the United Zion Church is a denomination which consists of just 13 churches found exclusively in three counties in south central Pennsylvania.

To be considered a denomination of the visible church², one would think that the organization's doctrinal beliefs would be similar enough to the Bible so that they could be easily recognized as being derived from that source. So, if a religious organization held to beliefs that were evidently derived from some source other than the Bible, serious questions could and should be raised as to whether or not it qualified as a legitimate denomination of the visible church.

Such is the case with the group called Seventh Day Adventists. They profess themselves to be very much a part of the true church as they declare their position to be "upon the great fundamental teachings of the Christian faith."³ Upon initial examination of their doctrinal beliefs, one may be drawn to agree with them. But with a little further investigation, it is evident that some of their beliefs, including crucial concepts related to salvation, have come from "prophetic" utterances not recorded in the Bible.

So, is the Seventh Day Adventist organization one of many Christian denominations, or is it a separate religion, with origins in Christianity, but with dogmas that are unbiblical? Perhaps the following analysis will help the reader see that Seventh Day Adventism is unbiblical in its teachings, and is therefore undenominational in its relationship to the church, true or visible.

The History of Seventh-Day Adventism

Adventism is the belief in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as the sole hope of a sinful world. In the early to mid 1800's there was a considerable movement toward Adventism in England and Europe which eventually found its way to the United States. The movement created such a stir that public newspapers as well as theological journals regularly discussed the particulars of the Second Coming. In the United States, a man named William Miller (1782-1849) became a primary proponent of Adventist theology. Miller was a simple farmer who was saved in his mid- 30's, whereupon he joined a Baptist church. He proceeded to study the Bible intently for two years from 1816 to 1818, using only Cruden's Concordance and the marginal references in his copy of the Bible. At the end of this study, Mr. Miller concluded that the Second Coming would occur in about twenty five years.⁴ He said, "I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for His coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all His saints with Him; and that then He will reward every man as His work shall be."⁵

Over the next twenty five years, Miller had many opportunities to preach about his beliefs. He and others like him successfully convinced thousands of people to expect the Second Coming to occur in 1843. As the time drew near, excitement ran high. But not only did March 21, 1843 pass uneventfully, so did every day throughout the next year including March

21, 1844. Now, disappointment was high. Some of Miller's associates saved the day temporarily by resetting the date of the Advent of Christ as October 22, 1844.⁶ Up to 100,000 people were part of the Adventist movement at this time. Many of them sold their possessions and settled all their worldly affairs, leaving them to watch and pray as the day approached. Of course, as the sun rose on October 23, 1844, it was obvious that they were wrong again. In earlier disappointments, there had been many dropouts from the movement. Now there were many more. The feelings were aptly summarized by Dr. Josiah Litch, a Millerite leader in Philadelphia. On October 24 he wrote, "It is a cloudy and dark day here – the sheep are scattered – the Lord has not come yet."⁷

Some however would not be dissuaded. From the rubble of disappointment, three distinct groups formulated doctrinal theorems which when fused together would become the Seventh-Day Adventist movement.

1. On October 23, 1844, the day after the great disappointment, Hiram Edson had a vision while walking in a corn field. He saw Christ move from the Holy Place of the Heavenly Temple into the Holy of Holies in that celestial tabernacle. From this vision it dawned upon him that they had been looking for the wrong thing all along. The Adventists had been looking for Christ to return to earth on October 22, 1844, when they should have been looking for Him to enter the Holy of Holies in Heaven. This notion laid the foundation for a crucial part of Seventh-Day Adventist theology called today "investigative judgment." O. R. L. Crosier, a friend of Edson's, was instrumental in helping Edson formulate the particulars of this doctrine.

2. In 1846 and in 1849 respectively, Joseph Bates of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, published two pamphlets on the subject of Seventh-Day worship for Christians. The first was called *The Seventh-Day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign*. The second was called *A Seal of the Living God*. In these writings, Bates argued that the Sabbath had been established in the Garden of Eden as the day of worship and that the day of worship had never been changed. Based primarily on Revelation 14:6-12, he further concluded that the Pope was the beast identified in verse 9 and the mark of the beast was Sunday worship. Some others in the remnant of Adventism had also started to worship on Saturday. Bates' teaching greatly encouraged this practice. He was joined in its promotion by several others including Hiram Edson, James White and Ellen Harmon.

3. Ellen Harmon had suffered injuries as a child when another girl threw a rock and hit her in the face. Her injuries included nerve damage which ultimately led to epilepsy and fainting spells. These effects lent themselves to Ellen's claim of having received the gift of prophecy, purported to be a restoration of the spiritual gift described in 1 Corinthians 12. A resident of Portland, Maine, Miss Harmon began presenting her prophecies to a group of former Millerite Adventists who suggested the "spirit of prophecy" was divinely intended to be manifest in the remnant of the last days. They looked to Ellen as a possessor of this "spirit of prophecy" and gave great weight to the things she proclaimed. James White married Ellen Harmon on August 30, 1846.

Together, Hiram Edson, Joseph Bates, and James and Ellen White organized a religious body which became the Seventh-Day Adventists. This group claimed at least three doctrinal distinctions: a belief that on October 22, 1844, Jesus Christ began His work of cleansing the Heavenly Sanctuary and judging professing believers, a belief that Saturday worship is a seal of God upon true believers, and a belief that the gift of prophecy actively reveals new truth for today with the intent of giving a fuller explanation of the text of Scripture. The first came from a vision in a field, the second from a spectacular correlation between the Sabbath and the mark of the beast, and the third from the seizures of an epileptic young woman.

In 1860 at a conference in Battle Creek, Michigan, this organization officially adopted the name Seventh-Day Adventists. The name describes them as Adventists who worship on the Seventh Day, the Sabbath.

Doctrinal Beliefs of Seventh Day Adventism

Let us consider the three distinctive doctrines of Seventh-Day Adventism which were significant to its becoming an organization: the spirit of prophecy, investigative judgment, and Sabbath worship.

The Bible and Prophecy

Seventh-Day Adventists profess to believe in the inspiration of Scripture. They say, "We take the Bible in its entirety, believing that it not merely contains the word of God, but is the word of God. We believe in the authority, veracity, reliability, and truth of the Holy Scriptures."⁸ They profess also to believe that the canon of Scripture was closed with the conclusion of the Book of Revelation. They say, "The prophetic gift produced the Bible itself. In post-Biblical times it is not to supersede or add to Scripture, because the canon of Scripture is now closed."⁹

In stating their conviction on the integrity of the Bible, they refer to the gift of prophecy which has had a great influence upon what they believe. Their claim for the value of Post-Biblical prophets (of which Ellen White is the primary one) is that they are equal in importance to the prophets of Biblical times whose prophecies were truly from the Lord, but never written down or included in the canon of Scripture. Therefore Mrs. White's words carry as much weight for them as the words of the prophets Nathan, John the Baptist, Philip's four daughters, and many others like them.¹⁰

Further, they relate the spirit of prophecy in the latter days to the "testimony of Jesus" referred to in Revelation 19:10 where it says, *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*¹¹

Regarding Ellen White's prophecies and writings, they say (in her words) that they are a "lesser light" leading sincere men and women to "the greater light."¹² They claim that her Post-Biblical prophetic utterances are only used to uphold the Bible and explain its teachings. In defense of her writings¹³ they declare that careful examination affirms they are all in agreement with Scripture and that all her predictions have either been fulfilled or are in the process of being fulfilled.

Analysis

Let's be fair but logical. The Seventh-Day Adventists are emphatic in declaring that Ellen White's prophecies are not equal to Scripture and that the Bible remains as the supreme standard. But they also claim that she was a true prophetess who received direct communication from God and that her words serve as a guide in understanding the Bible and a guide in applying Bible principles. There is no doubt that her words bear a great influence upon Seventh-Day Adventist thinking and belief and that they accept her prophetic utterances as true revelation from God Himself. While they insist that the Bible is the complete body of truth for believers today, they depend heavily upon Ellen White's explanation of what the Bible means. Referring to her own prophecies as the "Testimonies" (that is, the testimonies of Jesus as in the spirit of prophecy from Revelation 19:10), Mrs White said, "Additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the Testimonies, simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse....The fact that God has revealed His will to men through His Word,

has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings."¹⁴ In other words, without the prophecies of Ellen White, many would be hindered from understanding the Bible and many would miss the truth altogether.

They claim there is no Scriptural evidence that God would withhold any of His Spiritual gifts from the church at any time. Rather, it is the church's fault that for many centuries the gift of prophecy was not evident. And so we are to be grateful that in these latter times, Ellen White yielded to the spirit of prophecy and through the Holy Spirit has given us vital prophecies for our enlightenment.

Yet 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, *but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail*. The word fail is "katargeo" (Strong's Number 2673). It means to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish, to pass away, be done away, to terminate all intercourse with one. In the context, verse 9 says, *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part*. The communicative Spiritual gifts of the early church were used to convey parts of God's revelation to the New Testament Church. Verse 10 says, *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away*. That which is perfect is set in direct contrast to that which is in part. That which is in part is identified as the Spiritual gifts of knowledge and prophecy (verses 8-9). So what is that which is perfect? The word "perfect" in verse 10 is neuter in gender. To identify Jesus Christ with the neuter word "perfect" would not make sense. And in the context, contrasting Jesus Christ with the spiritual gifts of knowledge and prophecy does not make sense either. The gifts of knowledge and prophecy communicated parts of God's revelation to the church, and the clear opposite of that is the completed Word of God – the Bible. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 teaches that when the Word of God would be perfect (which means complete), the means of communicating parts of that revelation would be caused to cease. So there is Scriptural evidence for the cessation of the gift of prophecy. In fact, this Scriptural evidence identifies the time of termination to correspond to the time of the completion of the canon of Scripture. Since Seventh-Day Adventists believe the canon of Scripture was closed with the writing of the book of Revelation, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 presents a serious problem to the weight of Ellen White's words as being direct communication from the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, it is double talk to say that Ellen White's words do not supercede the Bible and at the same time to say in effect that it is her words which allow the Bible to be properly understood. Clearly, Seventh-Day Adventists' beliefs regarding the gift of prophecy and the influence of Post-Biblical prophets (primarily Ellen White) show that they rely heavily on Ellen White's explanation of Scripture. And perhaps if truth be told, many of them may rely more on Mrs. White's words than on Scripture itself.

But what about Ellen White's integrity as a prophetess? The Bible declares that every prediction a prophet makes must come true or that person is a false prophet. As Deuteronomy 18:21-22 declares, *And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shall not be afraid of him*. So can any of Ellen White's predictions be proven to be false? In the Spalding-Magan Collection, page 21, Ellen White said, "Slavery will again be revived in the Southern States; for the spirit of slavery still lives. Therefore it will not do for those who labor among the colored people to preach the truth as boldly and openly as they would be free to do in other places. Even Christ clothed His lessons in figures and parables to avoid the opposition of the Pharisees."¹⁵ Has anyone noticed whether or not slavery has been revived in the southern states? "In 1873, the editor of the Swedish edition of "Advent Herald," Mr. C. Carlstedt, had become seriously ill with typhoid fever. Mrs. White and others were called to his bedside to pray for Carlstedt. On their way home from the prayer meeting, Mrs. White remarked that the Lord was... 'present with his restoring power, to raise Carlstedt, whose sickness was not unto death, but to the glory of

the Son of God.”¹⁶ Actually, Mr. Carlstedt never recovered and in fact died within one week of Mrs. White’s prediction. So what kind of prophet is Ellen White? Can any of her words be trusted as being truly from the Holy Spirit since some of her words obviously were not? If a prophet were true, would not all their prophetic words be true?

The Cleansing of the Temple

According to Seventh-Day Adventist teaching, Christ ministered daily in the Holy Place of the Heavenly Tabernacle from the day of His ascension until October 21, 1844, performing there His priestly service for needy man. Then on October 22, 1844, Christ moved from the Holy Place to the Holy of Holies in that Heavenly Sanctuary. His purpose in moving to the Holy of Holies was to begin the process of applying the atonement to individuals.

They say they believe that the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ was completed once and for all on the cross of Calvary. But they make a distinction between completing the work of atonement and the application of the atonement to individuals. They believe the completion of the work of atonement makes salvation possible, but the application of the atonement is necessary for salvation to be experienced. “It is this latter provision of priestly ministry that accomplishes the actual, experiential, and continuous heart cleansing in the individual, not only from the guilt but also from the pollution and power of sin....We feel it to be most important that Christians sense the difference between the atoning act of Christ on the cross as a forever completed sacrifice, and His work in the sanctuary as officiating high priest, ministering the benefits of that sacrifice.”¹⁷

So what is Christ supposedly doing in the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Sanctuary that effectively applies the atonement to individuals? Seventh-Day Adventist’s beliefs in this matter consist of a correlation between the activities of the Day of Atonement of the Old Testament (Leviticus 16) and the present activities of Christ in Heaven. First, as the High Priest cleansed the earthly sanctuary with the blood of animals, so Christ is cleansing the Heavenly sanctuary with His own blood (based on an interpretation of Hebrews 9:22-23). It is believed that the effects of the fall of man were so far reaching that even heavenly things were in need of cleansing and so the blood of Christ is apparently being continually applied (since October 22, 1844) to fulfill this need. Secondly, Christ is removing the sins of those who are proven, through an investigative judgment, to have placed their faith in Christ. This investigation is necessary, they say, not for God, but for the universe in answering the charges of Satan.

“Human beings belong to one of three classes: (1) the wicked, who reject God’s authority; (2) genuine believers, who, trusting in the merits of Christ through faith, live in obedience to God’s law; and (3) those who appear to be genuine believers but are not. The unfallen beings can readily discern the first class. But who is a genuine believer and who is not? Both groups are written in the book of life, which contains the names of all who have ever entered God’s service (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Rev. 21:27). The church itself contains genuine and false believers, the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:28-30). God’s unfallen creatures are not omniscient; they cannot read the heart. So a judgment is needed – before the second coming of Christ – to sift the true from the false and to demonstrate to the interested universe God’s justice in saving the sincere believer. The issue is with God and the universe, not between God and the true child. This calls for the opening of the books of record, the disclosing of those who have professed faith and whose names have been entered into the book of life.”¹⁸

Investigative judgment supposedly works like this – When a person’s name comes up in the investigation, Christ examines the record to determine if that person has truly tried to keep all of God’s commandments. If so, the person “passes” the investigative judgment and is deemed worthy to have a part in the first resurrection. That is, he passes unless he is still living, in which case, his sins are only forgiven and not blotted out. His sins cannot be blotted out before he dies because his record is not yet complete. He may yet commit more sins which will

effect the final decision. Therefore, even though his sins have been forgiven, they remain on record until the person's life record is completed upon his death. "The actual blotting out of sin, therefore, could not take place the moment when a sin is forgiven, because subsequent deeds and attitudes may affect the final decision. Instead, the sin remains on the record until the life is complete – in fact, the Scriptures indicate it remains until the judgment."¹⁹ In other words, a person can never know for certain in this life if he will be resurrected unto life in Christ because the actual decision about that will not be made until Christ examines or judges his life after he is dead.

Analysis

This is an amazing extrapolation of Scriptural statements into an otherwise unknowable concept. First of all, the suggestion that part of Heaven is in need of cleansing, is entirely unbiblical. Heaven is a place of holiness and purity. Secondly, atonement is an Old Testament term which refers to the covering of sin. Sin was covered by the blood of bulls and of goats because *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins* (Hebrews 10:4). The blood of animals was only intended to be a picture of the blood of Christ which would be efficacious in the matter of sin. Christ's blood obtained eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12). In the redemption effected by Christ's blood, there is a stark contrast to the atoning work of the blood of animals. Hebrews 10:4 says their blood could never take away sin. Hebrew 10:11 says those sacrifices offered by priests on a daily basis could never take away sin. But in contrast to this, Hebrews 10:12 says that Christ made one sacrifice for sin and sat down at the right hand of God. By that one offering, Christ perfected (perfect tense – completed past action with continuing effects into the future) for ever them that are sanctified (verse 14). We have (present tense) therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (verse 19). Christ *put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself* on the cross (Hebrew 9:26), not by some investigative judgment still going on.

When Christ entered into heaven in His ascension, He sat down on the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 8:1) and there He continues (Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1) to intercede on our behalf. He did not enter into a Heavenly Sanctuary to be continually involved in priestly duties. In His intercession at the right hand of God the Father, Christ rebuts the accusations of Satan by pointing to His completed work.

As a completed work, redemption and propitiation are immediately applied to one who receives the truth by grace through faith alone. Eternal life is not conditional upon faithfulness to the end of one's life as proof of real faith. Rather, eternal life is given immediately upon one's receiving Christ through faith. Jesus Himself said, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath (present tense) eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed (perfect tense – completed past action with effects continuing into the present) from death unto life* (John 5:24).

The Scape Goat

On the Day of Atonement, two goats are used. One goat is killed and its blood is used in a sin offering for the people as it is sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Upon the other goat, still alive, the High Priest placed his hands, confessing the sins of the people and in effect transferring the sins of the people to the goat. The goat was then released and sent into the wilderness, carrying the sins of the people away.

Seventh-Day Adventists contend that since the scapegoat is never killed it cannot represent Christ. Therefore, it is interpreted as representing Satan. "The full accountability for sin will be rolled back upon Satan, its originator and instigator. Satan, and his followers, and all the effects of sin, will be banished from the universe by destruction."²⁰ They seek to make a

distinction between individual responsibility for sins committed by human beings and the accountability of Satan as the instigator and originator of sin. Christ they say provides the ultimate propitiation for man's sins, but Satan will bear the burden of originating sin. "Satan makes no atonement for our sins. But Satan will ultimately have to bear the retributive punishment for his responsibility in the sins of all men, both righteous and wicked."²¹

Analysis

This identity of the scapegoat with Satan raises some serious problems. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest confessed the sins of the people, laying them on the head of the scapegoat. Leviticus 16:22 says *And the goat shall bear upon him all **their** iniquities unto a land not inhabited.* Seventh-Day Adventists try to make it sound like the scapegoat is only carrying Satan's burden of originating sin. But there is nothing in the context to suggest such a thing. The scapegoat clearly bears the sins of the people.

The fact that the scapegoat does not die is not a problem to its association with Christ. Two goats are used to show two aspects of Christ's work. The goat that dies clearly relates to the sacrificial death of Christ, and the scapegoat is a picture of how effectively Christ's sacrifice disposes of sin. Seventh-Day Adventists' understanding of death is part of the problem. They believe that in death a soul is sound asleep and there is no consciousness. The truth is that everyone is conscious after death, regardless of whether they are in heaven or hell. When Christ was dead, He was still conscious and as the Scapegoat carried our sins away to the grace, never to be seen again.

John the Baptist in noting the arrival of Christ said, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.* This clearly identifies Jesus Christ as the one who takes man's sins away.

In addition, while Satan will surely be judged, there is no Scriptural testimony to Satan being judged for the sin of man. Man is fully accountable for sin and its origin in the human race. Romans 5:12 says, *Wherefore, as **by one man** sin entered into the world, not **by Satan**.* 1 Timothy 2:14 explains that Adam was not deceived when he entered into the transgression. He sinned entirely in the volition of his own heart. If Adam was not deceived, Satan cannot be blamed for Adam's decision. Satan has enough guilt within himself to warrant all of the judgment decreed upon Him by the Word of God. The fact that he suggested sinful action to Adam does not make him accountable for the conscious decision Adam made. Adam and all his descendants are each accountable for their own decision to sin.

Saturday Worship

To Seventh-Day Adventists, the Sabbath is central to the law of God and to His requirement for believers today. "We believe, without any reservations, that the Sabbath is the memorial of an immutable historical fact – a finished creation, and the Creator's rest on the specific seventh day at the close of creation week. We say it humbly, but we believe that nothing – no person, or group, or power on earth – can change the commemorative, historical fact that God rested on the seventh day of creation week and gave His rest day to mankind as the perpetual memorial-reminder of a finished work – never repealed, and never to be repealed. And we believe, furthermore, that the Sabbath will ever be the eternal memorial of God's creative power and righteousness (Isaiah 66:22,23), and will remain the everlasting reminder of His justice and sovereign government, as well as of His wondrous plan of redemption and the recreation of man through the wonders of His grace."²²

They site Paul's attendance at the Temple and the Synagogue on Sabbath days as affirmation that the church continued Sabbath worship even after its beginnings in the book of

Acts. They attribute the change of the worship of the church from the Sabbath to Sunday to the heretical Roman Catholic Church. And, they declare a present accountability to obey the Sabbath because of the prophecies of Ellen White. "We recognize that the Sabbath was not a test in medieval times. And we do not believe that it was a test in the days of the great sixteenth-century Reformation, or even in Wesley's day. But in these "last days" when, we believe, all truth is to be restored before Christ's second coming, and the message with divine import is to come to mankind on the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, there is a moral accountability for obedience on the part of those to whom light and conviction have come."²³ (Then quoting Ellen White) they say, "When Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome will thereby honor popery above God."²⁴ Their contention is that if members of Christian churches worship on Sunday, sincerely thinking (by false teaching) that Sunday is the Sabbath, then God will take that into consideration in the Judgment. But once Sunday worship is decreed by law, men will be guilty of receiving the mark of the beast (the pope) when they choose to worship on Sunday rather than on the Sabbath.

Analysis

In the end of creation, Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that God rested from His works on the seventh day and in doing so he blessed and sanctified that day. The term "seventh day" does not appear again until Exodus 12:15 and not until Exodus 16:26 is it identified as the Sabbath. The term Sabbath does not appear at all in Scripture until Exodus 16:23. The Seventh-Day Adventists explain that this lack of mention of the Sabbath in man's early years shows that man had "largely lost sight of the Sabbath. The rigorous requirements of slavery seem to have made Sabbath observance very difficult. Soon after they gained their freedom, God strongly reminded them, through the miracle of manna and the proclamation of the Ten Commandments, of their obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath."²⁵

Could it be that there was no stated Law of Sabbath worship until the Mosaic Law given? There certainly is no Biblical record of such a command. Genesis 2:1-3 is only a record of an historical event and does not include a command.

So what is the purpose of the Sabbath? Seventh-Day Adventists sight several significations of the day, including its being a perpetual memorial of creation, a symbol of redemption, a sign of sanctification, a sign of loyalty, a sign of righteousness by faith, and a symbol of resting in Christ. They say that "as Adam and Eve's loyalty was tested by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil placed in the midst of the garden of Eden, so every human being's loyalty to God will be tested by the Sabbath command placed in the midst of the Decalogue."²⁶

God resting on the seventh day is referred to in Hebrews chapter four where its true significance is explained. In verse 4 it says, *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.* Then in verses 10-11 it says, *For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.* The intent of God resting on the seventh day in creation was to provide a picture of the rest one can have for eternity through Jesus Christ. This rest is given to him when he stops striving to earn salvation by his own works (which is unbelief) and instead receives the gift of salvation through faith. This is something that a believer may enjoy everyday of his life and so we are warned about the limitations doubt causes in the Christian life when verse 1 of this context says, *Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* True believers cannot actually come short of it, but they can seem to through unfaithfulness. But while God's resting on the seventh day of creation is

referred to in its figurative significance, never in this context or any other is Sabbath worship identified as a test for loyalty to God.

Seventh-day Adventists are concerned about not being able to obey the Ten Commandments if they do not hold church services on Saturday. The fact is, a true believer today has the privilege of honoring the Sabbath every day of his life as he rests from trusting in good works as a means to obtain salvation and as he rests in the work of Jesus Christ who did everything on our behalf that needs to be done. God makes it clear in the New Testament that observing a day is not the crucial matter. He said, *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). So the Sabbath day is only a shadow of things to come. It is not the real thing. The rest we have in Christ from our unprofitable works is the real thing.

The reason today's Christians worship on Sunday is not because a Roman Catholic decreed it so. It is because Jesus Christ arose from the dead on a Sunday, the first day of the week. We worship in triumph of the victory Christ secured for us in His demonstration of power over death. We do not worship in reclining fear, but in victorious hope. This is in perfect harmony with the New Testament where it tells us that immediately after the resurrection Jesus met with his disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:19), Paul preached to the disciples in Troas on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and believers are instructed to set aside their offerings unto the Lord on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Conclusion

Seventh Day Adventists profess belief in many of the doctrines that Christians hold dear.

1. The inspiration of the Bible
2. The Trinity
3. The Deity of Jesus Christ
4. Salvation obtained by the new birth experience.
5. Baptism by immersion following repentance and forgiveness of sins.
6. The resurrection of the just and the unjust.
7. The gifts of the Spirit to the church
8. The Second Coming of Christ
9. The Millennium
10. Creation

At a glance, this list looks very Biblical. But Seventh-Day Adventism is a study in contradictions. For example, Seventh-Day Adventists profess to believe that no one can be saved by works. At the same time they believe that the Ten Commandments are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. In fact, their doctrine of investigative judgment clearly suggests that a person's works have a great bearing on whether or not they ultimately are saved. They profess they have assurance of their salvation, yet they proclaim that no one can be sure of their salvation until after their life record is complete. They profess absolute allegiance to the Word of God, but they put great weight upon the words of Ellen White and seem afraid to interpret the Scriptures in a manner that contradicts what she said.

Consider the words of one E. B. Jones, who was a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist movement but who came out of it through the grace of God.

"Just as this writer so correctly points out, the Adventist theory of the way of salvation is

virtually a repudiation of grace. While they acknowledge, through the medium of the “inspired” compiler and expositor of their beliefs, that by the death of Christ redemption has been purchased for the sinner, the “messenger” is quick to introduce the small yet very significant word “but,” and insist that in addition to the price which God, nearly two millenniums ago, accepted as entirely adequate for man’s salvation, one must, by his works, demonstrate his worthiness of receiving it! What an astounding denial of the Gospel of pure grace is this? Oh, that every sincere, thoughtful, truth-seeking Seventh-Day Adventist reader – and all others, as well, who are likewise bowed down in soul as they struggle on under the harsh, galling, impossible exactions of the law – may soon learn the wondrous truth that in the Gospel’s plan of salvation, grace is all sufficient; that the Good News of God’s grace presents salvation as an absolutely free gift – free, plus nothing – to all who believe!....Then will the law no longer be accorded the supremacy. Then will Christ Jesus, the perfect Exemplar, the perfect Embodiment of grace, have the preeminence, as is His blood-bought right and due. And then, too, many a precious, now enfeathered soul – just as I have been – shall likewise be made “free indeed!”²⁷

He declares further what the Seventh-Day Adventists truly believe, by his own experience as a member of that movement: “(1) That the law given at Sinai is as much in force today as it was previous to the death of Christ at Calvary; (2) that the Ten Commandments constitute the Christian’s rule of life; (3) that only when combined with perfect obedience to the law does one’s exercise of faith in Christ gain for him the favor of God; (4) that if one fails to keep the law, and especially the fourth commandment, he is lost; (5) that the true Gospel is today being proclaimed only by those who (professedly) ‘keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus’ – that is, only by the Seventh -Day Adventists; (6) that no one, regardless of how genuinely he has been converted, should consider himself as being saved; and (7) that eternal life is a gift which only ‘the faithful’ – only those who are strictly obedient to the law – will receive when Christ comes.”²⁸

Finally, Brother Jones refers to a Bible student’s declaration that Seventh-Day Adventism “is but a Jewish system with a Christian dress – a system of legalism, and a travesty of the truth.”²⁹

As such, can we call it truly Christian? Of course, with today’s ecumenical spirit of inclusivism, many would have no trouble accepting Seventh-Day Adventism as a denomination of the visible church. So perhaps our question is not whether it is a denomination of the visible church, but whether it is a part of the true church? The answer can be determined by the consideration of another question. If a person believes Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine, can he be saved and go to heaven? If a person believes that Jesus Christ is right now investigating the faithfulness of each professing believer to determine their worthiness to have their sins not just forgiven, but blotted out, and if a person believes that Jesus will not make that determination until his life record is completed upon his physical death, is that person trusting in salvation by grace through faith alone in what Jesus Christ did for him in His death, burial, and resurrection? If a person believes that Sabbath worship is a test of a person’s loyalty to God, is that person trusting in faith or works? If a person believes that the spirit of prophecy is still revealing new light on the meaning of the Word of God today, can that person ever have absolute confidence in what he believes, lest new light bring a change to the understanding of the Bible?

The Bible is the truth as it is written, not as it is explained by new revelation. And the truth is that Jesus Christ did everything that needs to be done for salvation and then sat down on the right hand of the throne of God the Father, leaving only faith in His finished work as a condition for salvation. The truth is that eternal life is bestowed upon a person in the moment he exercises faith in his response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The truth is that the keeping of the Law is not a burden to be labored upon in proving our worthiness, but a privilege to be lived out as an expression of gratefulness for the grace of God. The truth is that anyone who

believes something different than the truth of the Bible as it is written is not saved and does not have eternal life.

The only conclusion to which we can arrive is that Seventh-Day Adventism is unbiblical. Even though it professes to believe so many of the precious Bible truths that may lead a person to salvation in Christ, it is too full of contradictory beliefs derived from extra-biblical sources to be considered a Bible believing organization. In fact, Seventh-Day Adventism's core doctrines are so different from proven traditional Bible teaching, that the organization appears to be simply undenominational in its relationship to the true church.

Footnotes:

¹ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1973.

²The visible church is a term used here to denote the church as the world sees it, including both actual believers and nonbelievers who similarly profess to be Christians. There is the visible church and then there is the true church consisting of only true believers which make up the body of Christ which exists regardless of denominational affiliation or lack thereof.

More On The Undenomination

An Examination of Seventh-Day Adventism

[In the last issue of Rejoicing From the Hills, a lengthy article presented the core beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventism. This article explores additional details of their doctrinal beliefs as a continuation of the previous article.]

Further Considerations

The Law

Seventh-Day Adventists profess that salvation is wholly by grace and not by the keeping of the law. "Salvation is not now, and never has been, by law or works; salvation is only by the grace of Christ."³⁰ At the same time they contend that the Ten Commandments are inseparable from the very nature of God. Ellen White said, "The law of God is as sacred as Himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom."³¹

Ellen White taught that the presence of the Ten Commandments tablets in the ark of the covenant was what gave "value and sacredness" to the ark, which served "merely as a receptacle for the tables of the law."²⁹ The ark used in the earthly tabernacle, she claimed, was an exact replica of the true ark in the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore, the Ten Commandments tablets being housed in the earthly ark was an indication that a set of original law tablets rests inside the ark of the covenant which sits in the sanctuary in heaven. This is then her proof that the law of the Old Testament and particularly the Ten Commandments is the basis upon which Jesus Christ evaluates the faithfulness of professing believers. Mrs. White testifies to the supremacy of the law when she says, "the law of God is the one unerring rule by which all opinions, doctrines, and theories are to be tested."³² The conclusion of Seventh-Day Adventists is, therefore, that while the works of the law are not the **means** of salvation, they are

nonetheless the **test** of whether or not a person is saved. “While works are not a *means* of salvation, good works are the inevitable *result* of salvation.”³³ [Italics theirs.] Ellen White said, “The opposite and no less dangerous error is, that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption...If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life?”³⁴ She further said, “The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment...Those who in the judgment are ‘accounted worthy’ will have a part in the resurrection of the just.”³⁵

Analysis

So, while they say that works have nothing to do with salvation, that salvation is wholly by grace through faith in Christ, clearly works have a part in Seventh-Day Adventist soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). After I trust Christ for salvation, according to this system, I must demonstrate the veracity of my profession by consistently obeying the Law, or I am in danger of being declared a false professor. They say that the Book of Life contains the names of “all whom God could conceivably consider as candidates for His eternal Kingdom.” But, “those who do not overcome will be blotted out as sinners against God.”³⁶ Those who overcome, according to Seventh-Day Adventism are those who faithfully exhibit the law of God in their lives.

This demonstrates a failure in Seventh-Day Adventist theology to distinguish between the law as a rigid system and the righteousness of the law as a practice of the sanctified believer. Romans 7:12 declares indeed that *the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*. But in Romans 7:6 we are admonished to *serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter*. A rigid keeping of the letter of the law is not that which pleases the LORD. Anyone can follow objective laws and give the appearance of conformity as the Pharisees did in the New Testament. But external compliance is not the measure of a person’s right standing with God. Jesus said to the Pharisees, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith...* The weightier matters of the law, Jesus said, were not in the letter, but in the spirit of the law where the righteousness of the law was to be found. The whole nation of Israel was also guilty of such an approach to religion when God said to them, *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings* (Hosea 6:6).

When Mrs. White says that the ark of the covenant was merely a receptacle for the tables of the law, she makes an egregious error in elevating law above mercy. The value of the ark was not the stone tablets housed inside of it, but the merciful God who rested upon it. The ark of the covenant was a mercy seat for the Divine, who said it would be a place where **HE** would meet with the people (Exodus 25:22; 30:6). The law was not placed in the ark as an indication that keeping the law would be the result of God’s mercy showered upon men in salvation. Rather, the law was the tool God used to draw men to the mercy seat, as they saw their utter inability to keep the law and realized how desperately they needed the panacea of God’s mercy (Galatians 3:24-25).

Eternal Security

Seventh-Day Adventists believe that a person may make a profession of faith, but not be saved in the end. “The first work of grace is justification. The continuing work of grace in the

life is sanctification. Some who start on the way of God and rejoice in the thought of being justified, fail to appropriate the indwelling power of Christ by which alone they can be sanctified. The result is that at last they are found unworthy.”³⁷ In other words, while salvation is by grace, the work of grace makes both justification and sanctification part of salvation. While one may be justified, if he is not sanctified the salvation of grace is not complete. They quote James Arminius in support of this view: “It is this grace which operates on the mind, the affections, and the will; which infuses good thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections, and bends the will to carry into execution good thoughts and good desires....It averts temptations, assists and grants succor in the midst of temptations, sustains man against the flesh, the world and Satan, and in this great contest grants to man the enjoyment of the victory....This grace commences salvation, promotes it, and perfects and consummates it. *The Writings of James Arminius, vol. 2, pp. 472, 473.*”³⁸

Consequently, a Seventh-Day Adventist is not assured of awakening into the kingdom of God at the resurrection. While they give assent to the wonderful promise that no man can pluck the believer out of the Savior’s hands (John 10:28), they insist that all believers will be subjected to a judgment which will determine whether or not they are both justified and sanctified and thus worthy of the kingdom. This judgment includes an evaluation of a person’s faithfulness while he was living as well as an evaluation of the influences of his life on others after he has died.

Ellen White declared that the record of heaven includes every sordid detail of the sins of those who have professed to believe in Christ. “So 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....The books of record in heaven, in which the names and the deeds of men are registered, are to determine the decisions of the judgment....The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God.....A ‘book of remembrance’ is written before God, in which are recorded the good deeds of ‘them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name’....There is a record also of the sins of men....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.”³⁹

Confession of sin, therefore, has a lot to do with the matter of sanctification. Forgiveness, they say, is only applied when a person confesses his sins. Unconfessed sin remains unforgiven. “The Bible pictures Christ as our Advocate....But Christ cannot plead our cases unless we commit them to Him....If every detail of a man’s life is recorded in heaven, then his confessions are recorded there too, and of course the fact that Christ has forgiven his sins....When the name of a true child of God comes up in the judgment, the record will reveal that every sin has been confessed – and has been forgiven through the blood of Christ.”⁴⁰ Ellen White explains it more graphically. “As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. 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....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. – *The Great Controversy p. 483*⁴¹

Her inevitable conclusions follow. “No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine....Sad is the record which angels bear to heaven. Intelligent beings, professed followers of Christ, are absorbed in the acquirement of worldly possessions or the enjoyment of earthly pleasures...but few are the moments devoted to prayer, to the searching of the Scriptures, to humiliation of souls and confession of sin....Those who would share the benefits of the Saviour’s mediation should permit nothing to interfere with their duty to perfect holiness in the fear of God....Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face.”⁴²

But no matter how hard a Seventh-Day Adventist struggles to live a sanctified life while he is living on earth, he also has to be concerned about what he leaves behind when he dies. For the determination of his worthiness to inherit eternal life may still be effected even though he is in the grave. “In view of the principles here set forth, it seems to us abundantly clear that the acceptance of Christ at conversion does not seal a person’s destiny. His life record after conversion is also important. A man may go back on his repentance, or by careless inattention let slip the very life he has espoused. Nor can it be said that a man’s record is closed when he comes to the end of his days. He is responsible for his influence during life, and is just as surely responsible for his evil influence after he is dead. To quote the words of the poet, ‘The evil that men do lives after them,’ leaving a trail of sin to be charged to the account. In order to be just, it would seem that God would need to take all these things into account in the judgment.”⁴³

Analysis

In this there is a serious failure to distinguish between the elements of salvation and the elements of sanctification. Salvation is a momentary event in which a person is born again,⁴⁴ passing from death unto life when he is declared to be righteous. This declaration is made by God on the basis of a professed faith which the individual offers to God in place of the righteousness which he does not have and cannot obtain on his own. Romans 3:10 and 23 say, *There is none righteous, no not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* Romans 3:21-22 then says, *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe....* And Romans 10:13 says *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Romans 3:28 concludes, *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* Someone who has been justified by faith in Jesus Christ is secure forever in his God-declared salvation. Jesus Himself declared in John 5:24, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Requirements for salvation are totally embodied in the elements of faith. One must believe that he is a sinner and in honesty profess that to God. He must also believe that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came in the flesh and is the one who satisfied God entirely on his behalf regarding sin (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2). He must then call upon the name of the Lord in a profession of these beliefs and in trust that God’s promises of forgiveness and the gift of eternal life are true (Romans 10:9-13).

Sanctification, on the other hand, is a gradual process in the Christian life in which a believer works at mortifying the deeds of the flesh (Romans 6:12 and 8:13) and at learning how to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). Successful progressive sanctification is not a requirement for salvation. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, a description is given of the judgment a believer faces in the presence of Christ (as opposed to the judgment Seventh-Day Adventists propose is without the believer present). In verse 13 it says that *every man's work shall be made manifest*. His works will be identified as to quality reflected in the differences as between gold and wood, between silver and hay, and between precious stones and stubble. The works will then be tested by fire. The results of the judgment are declared in verses 14 and 15: *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*. This explains that there is reward for sanctified living and there is loss of reward for failing to live a sanctified life as a believer. But the unsanctified believer is not rejected from heaven for being unsanctified. Clearly the Bible declares that salvation is not performance based either before or

allusion to three states of being – at home in the body, presence with the Lord, and an intermediary sleep. It presents only two states of being – we are either at home in the body or we are present with the Lord.

Their beliefs in this regard are based on a premise that there is no distinction between body and soul, and that the spirit is not part of the intelligent being. Jesus makes a clear distinction between the body and the soul in Matthew 10:28 when He said, *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. If the soul and body are not separate entities, how can the body be killed but not the soul? In 1 Thessalonians 4:14, it says that in the rapture Jesus will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. Then in verse 16 it says that those same ones who are dead (asleep) in Christ will be raised from the dead. If they are not conscious, but asleep in the grave, how does Jesus bring them with Him from heaven before He raises them from the dead on earth? Obviously, it is the sleeping body that is raised from the earth and the conscious living soul that Jesus brings with Him from heaven.

Regarding the intelligence of the spirit, John clarifies this matter for us in 1 John 4:2-3. He says a spirit can confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, or a spirit can deny this truth. It would seem to take some intelligence to make such confessions or denials.

Seventh-Day Adventists also believe that man does not possess immortality at present but is only granted immortality in the resurrection. However, by declaring that man became a living soul, God declared that man as a person is an immortal being. It was his body that became mortal in the day of his spiritual death. This distinction is clear in what God told Adam regarding the forbidden fruit. He said that man would die in the very day that he would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve both ate of the fruit, but remained very much physically conscious in that day and for many days to follow. In light of this, either the serpent was right and man would not die by eating from the tree, or the death God was talking about was of a different nature than physical death. And if God was talking about a death of a different nature than physical death, the death to which God was referring left man conscious in his state of death. So you must either believe that Adam and Eve did not die in the day they ate of the forbidden fruit and God was a liar, or you must conclude that spiritual death and immortality are compatible concepts. The truth is that man's soul is immortal and man remains conscious even in his state of spiritual death. Consider Ephesians 2:1-3 in this regard. It is reasonable to conclude therefore that if a man is conscious in his spiritual death while he is living in his body, he will remain conscious in spiritual death after he leaves his body.

Eternal Punishment

Eternal punishment for the Seventh-Day Adventists is not punishment that continues for eternity. Rather it is momentary punishment whose effects last for eternity. "The eternal life will continue throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity; and the punishment will also be eternal – not eternal duration of conscious suffering, however, but punishment that is complete and final."⁴⁹

The contention is that the word "forever" does not always mean that something actually occurs continually forever, but that sometimes it refers to something that happened momentarily and the effects of it last forever. They give as an example the reference to *eternal redemption* in Hebrews 9:12. "Surely this does not mean redemption is going on through all eternity, or an unending work of judgment. The work of redemption is complete and eternal in its results....The same principle applies concerning 'eternal damnation'...'eternal fire'...'eternal punishment.'"⁵⁰

So they reject the idea of eternal conscious torment even though they acknowledge that the same word is used in a single context referring on the one hand to eternal life and on the other hand to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46).⁵¹

Logic dissuades them from believing in eternal torment. Life is a gift of God and they cannot conceive of eternal "life" being given to the wicked. Eternal torment would immortalize sin. Christ after all is said to "put away sin" (Hebrews 9:26), so how could sin continue to exist? For the wicked to live forever in a place of torment would only provide a plague spot in the universe of God. It would speak against the reputation of God making it look like He could not ultimately abolish sin. A place where the wicked would be tormented forever is therefore a contradiction of the character of God.⁵²

(Continued on next page)
Analysis

Jesus said in Matthew 25:46, *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* The numbers from Strong's Concordance for "everlasting" and "eternal" are exactly the same in this verse. Both words are also spelled identically in the Greek text. Even if we were to concede that the term forever may at times mean that something which occurred in a moment of time is followed by everlasting effects, the concepts of the words used and the context in which they are found would determine the accuracy of such an interpretation as opposed to the literal sense of meaning for forever. But what in the context of Matthew 25:46 would justify making two different interpretations of the same word? Only a predetermined theological necessity would lead a person to such a conclusion. Nothing in the context allows for it. In Mark chapter 9, Jesus refers several times to those who deserve to go to hell, where the fire shall never be quenched. He says it is a place *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched* (verses 43-48). If a fire consumes what it is feeding upon, the fire dies out. By saying that the fire is not quenched, Jesus affirms that there is something in the fire to feed its flames with fuel. By saying that their worm never dies, He affirms that there is the presence of human flesh in the fire for eternity.

Isaiah 66:23-24 tells us that in the context of the new heaven and the new earth, those that worship the LORD will *look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh* (vs. 24). Seventh-Day Adventists support their belief of annihilation in

eternal punishment with a contention that an eternal flame of torment would be a blight upon the purity of the eternal kingdom of God. Yet Isaiah affirms that those who are in that future kingdom will have the opportunity to look upon such a sight. In fact, according to John Gil, the Chaldees understood this passage to refer to the eternal punishment of the souls of lost men. "This will be always the case; conscience will be ever distressing, racking, and torturing them; it will never cease, nor cease doing this office, and so the Chaldee paraphrase of Isa 66:24 renders this phrase, *Nwtwmy al Nwhtmvn*, "their souls shall not die"; but shall ever continue in the dreadful torments and unspeakable horrors of a corroding conscience."⁵³

But what eternal purpose would God have in punishing men so? Seventh-Day Adventists fall into the error of thinking that God's eternal purpose is focused on the redemption of mankind. But God has a larger purpose in eternity. His focus is not on man but on Himself. Redeeming man is only part of that larger purpose. The larger purpose is that God Himself be glorified. Passages of Scripture like Ezekiel 28:20-26 show that God is glorified just as much in judgment as He is in salvation. He says to the inhabitants of Zidon, *I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her and shall be sanctified in her. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her street; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD* (verses 22-23).

Certainly, it is far better for us to be saved than to be lost. But eternal punishment of the lost will bring just as much glory to God as eternal deliverance of the saved. It is unfortunate that so many religious people, including the Seventh-Day Adventists, impose upon God a man focus in His eternal purposes, instead of accepting for themselves a God focus in their worship of Him.

Conclusion

This is not an exhaustive examination of all the nuances of Seventh-Day Adventist theology. But perhaps it is enough to show the unbiblical nature of what this religion professes to believe.

Seventh-Day Adventism lays a heavy burden upon its adherents. They are invited to believe in the grace of God and then burdened with the necessity of perfection in their obedience to the law to have any hope that the grace of God will actually be applied to their lives.

Thankfully, an honest reading of the Bible will result in an entirely different understanding. Jesus Christ alone is the propitiation for our sins. The only requirement to experience the benefits of that propitiation is faith. As God extends salvation to us by His grace, we have the wonderful opportunity to receive it in the outreached heart of faith. Please pray for those who are in bondage to the tenets of Seventh-Day Adventism, that they may be liberated by the truth and be brought to eternal rest in the Savior, Jesus Christ. 📖

Correction

In the last issue of Rejoicing From The Hills, the second article on Seventh-Day Adventism appeared. Please note the following correction in that article on page 8. Under the section Eternal Punishment, Analysis, in the last paragraph, the sentence that reads "But eternal punishment of the loss will bring just as much glory to God as eternal punishment of the saved," should read, "But eternal punishment of the lost will bring just as much glory to God as eternal deliverance of the saved."