

# A QUICK PRIMER ON THE RULES OF EVIDENCE

By William H. Hohmann

When it comes to truth versus deception, there are methods one can employ for recognizing the two. There is "hard" evidence such as a "thus saith the Lord" and other plain statements in Scripture that make an unmistakable statement.

Then there is "weak" evidence that often relies on the methods of deception such as assumption, rationalization, and inference.

If one goes back and examines the writings of HWA, they would discover his use of the methods of deception on a regular basis.

Allow me to provide an example.

In the old sabbath booklet, he stated, in relation to the sabbath and law, that if the law indeed were done away, people would be free to go about committing murder, theft, adultery, etc. on a wholesale basis.

How would you categorize this claim of his that has been repeated like a broken record by both Armstrongites and Seventh Day Adventists?

Do we have any statement in Scripture that backs up this claim? I've never seen one.

Let's ask some critical thinking questions here, and see what develops.

If you, you being a Christian with the very spirit of God in you who believes you have to "keep" that law (regardless of whether we define it as the "whole" law or just the Ten Commandments), discovered that you truly were not required to keep the conditions of that old covenant law that was between God and Israel as so stated in Scripture (hard evidence), would you, as a result, now go about committing these acts? No? Why not? After all, HWA insists you would!

To word this another way from a critical thinking point of view, is the law the only thing that keeps you from committing these acts? If the law truly was set aside, you are now going to indulge the flesh, right?

Please note Herbert W. Armstrong's claim is based in an accusation. This is not so much evidence as much as it is a form of persecution wrapped in an accusation. He is implying that Christians, without the restraint of the law, will go about living a sinful lifestyle. To HWA, the spirit of the law was no law at all. He accuses Christianity without the law as those who believe they have a license to sin.

So he gave a claim that had no evidence in support of it. What other ways is this claim lacking?

Do Christians sin? Yes. I ask, did King David have God's spirit? Yes, he did, and he was guilty of committing a number of sins, and here's part the point: He had that law! Yet he committed those sins after all. So, does the law prevent people from sinning? No! What then does the law do? It convicts the sinner of his sin, and condemns the sinner for his sin, and rightly and justly so.

Now what changed in regards to Christians and their relationship to that law? They were removed from the law, and this was made possible by putting an end to that covenant law. The Christian is defined as dead to the law and dead to sin. One who has died can no longer be held to a

covenant they were previously a party to (from the Jewish perspective), such as a marriage covenant.

This is “hard” evidence of Scripture. There is no way around it, and many have tried. You cannot be legally held to the conditions of a covenant you are not a party to, and a covenant that ended. The most common rationale (and rationales are not hard evidence) is that the institution of marriage continues, therefore the law continues. This rationalization is not relevant, for a dead person cannot enter into, or be a party to, a marriage covenant. The institution of marriage has no bearing on a dead person. Critical thinking would have us understand, if this were true and relevant, that dead people are still, somehow, bound to the mate they left behind, and that in the kingdom of God, people will still be married, contrary to the teachings of Christ. And finally, the institution of marriage can exist while single people exist. Single people are not held to a marriage covenant; the institution of the marriage covenant has no bearing on a single person.

This then is but one example of flawed logic, or the use of a logical fallacy, which is another of the methods of deception.

What you see being used by those who insist we are to keep the law, and especially the Sabbath, are all the methods of deception in an attempt to overcome the hard evidence about the Law and its relationship to Christians and Christianity. Yet all the rationalizations, assumptions, and inferences in the world cannot overthrow the hard evidence. In other words, 5 rationalizations do not overthrow one hard piece of evidence, and yet this is exactly the kind of practice you find among those who insist we are to keep the Law and Sabbath. Imagine if you will, these same people on trial for their lives, and the prosecuting attorney brings forth the sort of flimsy and weak evidence they use to try and prove we are all to keep the sabbath! They would be screaming foul at the top of their lungs.

Let's now look at more of the claims commonly used by those who insist we are to keep that law.

“The law was written with the finger of God, thereby demonstrating its importance to God and all mankind.”

Here then I will list out the criteria regarding evidence:

1. Does the claim resort to the use of inference, assumption, or rationalization? What we have is a premise followed by a drawn out conclusion based in assumption, rationalization, and inference.
2. Is there comprehensive evidence to support the claim? No. Nowhere do we find any declaration in Scripture that we should be keeping the Law because it was written by the finger of God.
3. Is there evidence to the contrary, and does the one making the claim address this evidence in order to demonstrate said evidence does not conflict or contradict the claim? There is evidence to the contrary, and rarely do you find them addressing evidence to the contrary using the proper methods of scholarship. I could have said you never see them doing this, but I have not read every scrap of what has been written by Sabbatarians.

Not all mankind was party to that covenant, and a fact of covenants is that, if you are not a party to a covenant, you cannot be held to the conditions of that covenant. God does not do things illegally.

4. Is the claim logical? No. There is no distinct connection between the premise and the conclusion.

Another example: The law was written in stone, thus showing the permanence of that law.

1. Does the claim resort to the use of inference, assumption, or rationalization? Yes. Without the premise, the conclusion can be shown to be false citing Jeremiah 31:31 and Hebrews 8:9.
2. Is there comprehensive evidence to support the claim? No. There is no declaration in Scripture that equates the “permanence” of stone with the permanence of that law.
3. Is there evidence to the contrary? Yes, as cited above.
4. Is the claim logical? No, for we could ask the question, “If the stone demonstrates their permanence, then where are the stones today? We could just as easily claim that, seeing as they are no more, therefore that law is no more.”

One of the favorites of the pro-Sabbath crowd is to use the statement about Jesus being Lord of the Sabbath. They do not recognize the fact that they are lifting the passage out of context and treating it eisegetically, which is yet another of the methods of deception. The claim goes like this:

The Sabbath was made for man (Gr. *anthropos*; mankind) and Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. therefore all mankind is required to keep it.

1. Does the claim resort to the use of inference, assumption, or rationalization? Yes, it rationalizes and assumes, and infers that man here means all men of all time.
2. Is there comprehensive evidence to support the claim? No. Nowhere do we find a commandment in Scripture where all Mankind are commanded to keep the Sabbath.
3. Is there evidence to the contrary? Yes. There are a number of references to Gentiles not being under the Law, and the Law includes the Sabbath Commandment. There are also the references to the Christian collective not being under the law. Also there is the evidence of the Sabbath being the sign of the Old Covenant between God and Israel. If all mankind were commanded to keep the Sabbath, it could not have been that sign.

Also, the Greek word *anthropos* can have a wide scope of understanding, whereas the Sabbath-keeper seeks to narrow its definition and application so that it must mean all mankind as opposed to the man to whom it was given, as is supported by the context and overall Scripture.

4. Is the claim logical? On the surface, out of context, the claim appears to be logical. We can demonstrate the flaw in the logic by citing a similar example where the flawed logic is more apparent.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. - Matthew 10:22

Jesus said that a Christian would be hated by “all” and “all” would include all other Christians. Therefore, Christians will be hated even by other Christians. All means “all inclusive,” without exception.

I can even demonstrate “comprehensive” evidence, seeing as the citation is found three times in Scripture by Christ, Who is the end authority. What comes out of His mouth must override all else!

Is it logical? No! Is there evidence to the contrary? Yes! Does it resort to inference, assumption, or rationalization? Yes! I would hope that people today understand the flaw in Clintonian semantics (“It all depends on what ‘is’ is.”)

I need to point out that a claim can pass some of these criteria, and yet still be false. Some can even fail the criteria and be true. The issue is, the more a claim passes these tests, the more likely it is true. Claims that have a premise, when it comes to religion, are more likely to be suspect. Premises can easily be false or based in a logical fallacy.

The most common false claims use inference, assumption, and rationalization instead of a "Thus saith the Lord" or a plain statement of biblical "fact." Another common deceptive claim is the use of trying to prove a negative. Examples:

Jesus never said not to keep the Law. Jesus never said not to keep the Sabbath.

Well, Jesus never said not to play the accordion either!

You cannot logically prove a negative. All such claims are useless when it comes to determining truth.

Once you get used to looking for arguments and claims that use the methods of deception, the easier it is to recognize them for what they are. But like anything else, it takes practice and a willingness to be honest with yourself when it comes to examining your own beliefs.

The one fact of Scripture that stands supreme is the Gospel; salvation through faith in Christ alone. Any claim or argument that is put forth, stating anything else is required or necessary in relation to one's salvation is a false claim. And yet, such claims abound.

Scripture claims salvation through faith, and it is this Gospel we are to believe; it is Christ in whom we place our faith. Everything else must be judged in relation to this. Where then does that leave the claim we are required to keep the Sabbath? It leaves it in contradiction to the Gospel. It is a claim that contradicts the hard evidence. It is a claim that resorts to the methods of deception.

I have given the criteria above in regards to how one evaluates a claim. One criteria I have not mentioned yet is what is called the falsifiability test, where a claim must be of such a nature that one can imagine evidence to the contrary. Rarely do you see such claims, but they do exist, and most such claims fall when examined through the other methods one uses to determine the truth of a claim. An example of a claim that fails this test would be a person who claims direct contact with God; that God spoke to him (or her) directly or through an another, such as an angel or prophet. You cannot produce evidence that proves the claim as false. You might be tempted to say you should accept the person's claim based on reverse logic (He speaks the truth, therefore God speaks to Him) or faith. However, from a critical thinking viewpoint, we have to ask ourselves if this is how God deals with mankind today, through a method that is easily faked.

Another example would be a religious leader who claims to be infallible. Note please that most today will deny infallibility, but demand adherence to what they teach, and will not tolerate anyone questioning them and what they teach! They may claim direct inspiration from God (as above) and therefore, what they turn around and impart to you is, indeed infallible while distancing themselves in the process. It is a word game with them.

The most common form of a claim that is unfalsifiable in a false belief system would be a claim where all evidence to the contrary is dismissed due to the nature of the claim. For example:

All true Christians keep the Sabbath.

If you counter claim that there are Christians who do not keep the Sabbath, it is dismissed because of the nature of the claim. If someone who does not keep the Sabbath claims to be a Christian, they are declared to be non-Christian, and indeed, anti-Christ. One's faith is dismissed, and one's faith is seen as less important than keeping a physical Old Covenant requirement. The claim, as stated, cannot be proven false simply because of the nature of the claim.

Here then is a list of commonly used methods of deception and misinformation:

The use of inference, rationalization, and assumption.

The use of eisegesis; taking a passage of Scripture out of context and drawing a conclusion not supported by the context, and not supported by the rest of Scripture.

The use of logical fallacies. There are several web-sites on the internet where these can be studied in detail.

Transference. Taking that which God commanded one person or group and applying it to another person or group. The most common example of this is teaching Christians they have to keep the Old Covenant law that they were never a party to, despite the weight of Scripture that forbids doing so.

Redefining words and terms. This is common with false systems of belief. You will often see an appeal to a regular dictionary when it is more appropriate to use a Bible dictionary.

Examples in the Sabbatarian world would include their claim that the Old Covenant law is eternal, or at least the Ten Commandments. What is not realized is that they have elevated the Ten Commandments to the status of God. It is God who is eternal. A form of transference is at play here in order to bolster the Law. The Sabbatarian unwittingly now serves the law as though it were a god, and this is contrary to the point Jesus was trying to make when He pointed out that He was "also" Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath's intent was to serve the man, and not the man to serve the Sabbath. The Sabbatarian ends up serving the Sabbath after all. Just look at the debates within the Sabbatarian community as to what one can and cannot do on the Sabbath. The most entertaining of these is the never ending soap opera over whether one can eat out at a restaurant on the Sabbath. The Pharisees of old are nothing compared to today's Sabbatarians.

Another example of this sort of thing is the Sabbatarian appeal to I John 3:4 and the translation there that has gone beyond translation into interpretation as found in the KJV where sin is defined as "the transgression of the law" – an impossible translation given the definition of *anomia* in relation to the time and place; the "Situation in Life" as commented on below. Only the KJV makes this interpretive translation, but no matter; it serves the purpose of the Sabbatarian, and all other translations and the evidence of our understanding of Greek and its usage at that time and place is ignored out of hand.

Black and white thinking. This is a form of rigid thinking where a claim is made in such a way as to force an opposite and extreme result should the claim be rejected. It is an "either-or" approach that leaves no other possibilities. HWA was a master at this sort of fallacy. Notice the title of the old Sabbath booklet he wrote, "Which day is the Christian Sabbath?" As you read the booklet, you find that the argument is redefined as one of, "either Saturday is the Sabbath, or Sunday. In the book he states he will examine whether a Sabbath is to be kept, but then never does. The issue is redefined as an "either-or" with the possibility that no day being required conveniently lost in the booklet. By setting up Sunday as a straw man, he knocks it down, leaving Saturday as the only thing left.

I have elsewhere shown that Friday can be the Sabbath; a fact that drives Sabbatarians nuts. Go east from Israel, paying attention to sunsets, and your sabbath, should you continue to the USA, will begin anywhere from 13 to 15 hours earlier than it does in Israel, seeing as the sun will set for you that much earlier, and this brings you to Thursday at sunset.

As mentioned before, HWA made the claim that, if the Law were no longer in force, people would be free to sin with impunity knowing there is no longer any punishment for sin. No other

possibilities are entertained. This is also a logical fallacy, and indeed many of the methods of deception I could list here are also logical fallacies. There is much overlap.

Negation of person. This is also known as an “Ad Hominem” where a person is attacked in order to reject what he or she has to say on a particular subject. The evidence they put forth is rejected out of hand because the one providing the evidence is not seen as being a true or worthy person. There is a logical fallacy that is the opposite of this, where one appeals to an authority figure in relation to the subject under discussion. They may know more about a topic, but their being an expert in the field does not make them invulnerable to error in that field.

There are quite a number of examples in Scripture where Jesus was treated with ad hominem. His critics said he had a demon, for example. You wouldn’t listen to what a demon has to say.

Likewise, the Sabbatarian resorts to ad hominem in order to negate the person and what they offer as evidence that conflicts with his belief system. The person is perceived, if they used to be a member of their group, as never really having been a part of the group to begin with, and that their leaving was to abandon the truth, and by extension, abandoning God.

HWA indoctrinated the members to shun and not listen to those who left, they having learned he was a fraud. If one left and made a lot of noise, they were “marked” and you would be in big trouble if you so much as said hello to that person. Gerald Flurry has commanded his followers to totally withdraw even from family members who have left Armstrongism in order to shield them from the mounting numbers of people who have left and also learned what a fraud he is.

If you are one who left the teachings of Armstrong, and tried to discuss what you have learned, you have probably been hit with such an ad hominem that is a conditioned response:

“You just hate God’s law.” “You just refuse to abide in the truth.” “You have fallen under the sway of the devil.” “Your mind has been corrupted.” “You have itching ears.” “You do not have any love, proving you are wrong.” “I don’t need to waste my time discussing this with someone who refuses to obey God’s law.”

Trying to discuss the teachings of Armstrong with them is seen as an attack on them and their beliefs, and such attacks are seen as not based in love.

One last method is difficult to categorize, but it is a very common practice among deceptive groups. They examine all the evidence brought forth that is critical of their beliefs, and look for one point; one argument that they feel comfortable in rejecting, thus justifying dismissal of everything. But when it comes to refuting their evidence that supports their beliefs, they insist you answer every single argument they put forth, and then it is not enough; not as long as they can come up with just one more argument in support of their beliefs, and in this never ending circle of debate, they conveniently forget all the arguments for their beliefs you showed to be false. Hypocrisy is the mainstay of a false religious system.

Some of the proper methods of Biblical understanding are listed above, and there are a few other major methods to consider:

Who is speaking, and who is being spoken to? Sabbatarians are notorious for ignoring this basic rule of understanding, taking that which was commanded of Israelites and assigning it to Christians in order to bolster their belief in the Sabbath and the rest of the Law, regardless of how they interpret what laws apply and which do not.

The “Situation in Life” is where you take into consideration the use of language and the culture of the time and place. As touched on above, the Greek word, *anomia* had a meaning in the Greek-speaking world of that time that conflicts with the “translation” given to it by the translators of the Church of England in the seventeenth century due to the heavy influence of the legalistic Puritan

sect within the church. These are the same translators who translated the Greek word for "Passover" as "Easter." The temptation here is to ask ourselves, if they are going to accept their translation of *anomia* into the five word English phrase, "the transgression of the law" then why don't they accept their translation of Passover into Easter? It is all arbitrary, "pick and choose" theology.

Exegesis is the process of understanding a passage in context. Like trying to understand anything else written in any book, one must base his or her understanding on a passage in relation to the immediate context, as well as the rest of the book. An example here is found in Matthew 5:17-19, where "the Law or the Prophets" is interpreted by Sabbatarians to be the legalities of the law.

The context refers to the Law and Prophets. Are there laws written and codified in the Prophets? No. How then can you destroy or fulfill in the prophet's laws that are not found in the Prophets? You cannot. Also, the passage relates that, whatever it is that is the topic, it is not altered down to jots and tittles. Again, the Sabbatarian concludes it is the Law; the legalities of the Law that do not change down to these strokes of the letters of the words that make up the Law. However, the context in the same chapter later on has Jesus altering points of that Law way beyond jots and tittles! Either Jesus was lying here, or the Sabbatarians have this all wrong!

Notice I just made a claim. Is there any evidence in Scripture that reveals Jesus to be a liar? I could also be using black and white thinking here; an "either-or" statement where other possibilities may exist, but given the context, I don't think so. What exists in the Law and Prophets with the potential to be fulfilled or destroyed? Prophesies. But this too is dismissed out of hand, quoting verse 18 and pointing out that the heavens and Earth are still here, Therefore Jesus did not fulfill all prophesies; therefore the law remains. That Jesus might be making a statement regarding His fulfilling prophesies now, and the rest of what is found in "the Law" will also be fulfilled "according to the book" up to the time heaven and Earth pass is also summarily dismissed without any proper exegesis. What is ignored by the legalist Sabbatarian is the consequences of their interpretation with the context.

If it is the legalities of the Law is the subject, then what happens with the passing of Heaven and Earth? The legalities of the law pass also! So, this Law, said by them to be "eternal," ends up in the intergalactic trash can, once it has been filled up to the full! Yep, great piece of exegesis on the part of Sabbatarians!

Ambassador theology classes gave lip service to some of the methods of proper scholarship, then taught what they wanted you to believe anyway. Even still, there were a number of students and instructors, trained by Der Fuhrer Armstrong, who came to the realization the theology of Armstrong was seriously flawed. One such instructor I know of taught fourth year Bible and was perhaps one of the top ten men in "the work." Others have quietly left. Some not so quietly. The point is, there are lots of men trained by Armstrong who, upon further education in the field of religion and Christianity, came to see that it was all a house built on sand. It was those who had a limited understanding of the Bible and the proper methods of scholarship who remained in the teachings of Armstrong. The same holds true today.

The quickest way to turn an Armstrongite into an ex-Armstrongite is to have them undergo intensive Bible study with a knowledge of the proper methods of recognizing truth and the proper understanding of how deceptions work while doing so without the colored lenses of Armstrongism coloring their eyes.

Easier said than done. Even as those of Jesus' time who were big on the law were said to be dull of hearing and seeing, so too the modern legalist. I have had many such people declare to me as though they were bragging; "I've proven it all to myself. I have examined all the evidence. I don't have to do it again." If ever there was a statement reflecting that dullness of hearing, seeing and learning, that's it.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is important that you understand; Everything on this blog is based on the current understanding of each author. Never take anyone's word for it, always prove it for yourself, it is your responsibility. You cannot ride someone else's coattail into the Kingdom.

Acts 17:11