

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, INC

Proclamation!

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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

UPDATE FROM UGANDA

Pastor Greg Taylor visits former Adventists

Late in 2002, Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. voted to raise support for a number of former Adventist pastors in Uganda who had studied the New Covenant and had left the Seventh-day Adventist church. The LAM, Inc. board

agreed that this support would be for a limited time to allow these men to establish a church and become financially independent. In addition to funds, Life Assurance Ministries helped to send Greg Taylor to Uganda to

meet with the former Adventists there and to encourage them in the gospel. Further, LAM Inc. contacted Stan Lincoln, an American missionary in Uganda with Mission Aviation Fellowship, to meet with these men on a regular basis to provide direction and outreach assistance including the Campus Crusade *Jesus* film, as they conducted public meetings and formed a congregation.

Greg Taylor along with his wife and sons left Adventism during the summer of 2001. Since 2002 Greg has been the pastor for spiritual formation at Crossroads Church in Hagerstown Maryland, and he and Paula also operate One Flock Ministries, an inter-denominational ministry which help those caught in sectarian systems to find freedom in Christ and community with other believers. This photo shows Greg standing in front of a typical village church in Uganda.

Late in 2003, LAM, Inc. received some disturbing reports that some of these Ugandan pastors were engaging in behaviors that were not honoring the gospel of Jesus Christ. Consequently, LAM did not renew its financial support of this movement, but it did continue to supply books and magazines for those who persisted in their outreach to the community.

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We now have seen that some seven churches have been born out of the one series of meetings we led here two and a half years ago.



Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

MISSION

To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

MOTTO

Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

MESSAGE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

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My son, my sin and the **New Covenant** COLLEEN TINKER

It was late on a Saturday night. Energized by agitation, I rushed from cleaning the kitchen sink to finishing the dessert for Sunday lunch. Our younger son could push my buttons in ways few could. His quiet but stubborn refusal to do his chores triggered my feelings of both insult and failure. What self-respecting mother raised a son who simply REFUSED to do his work? (Of course, he was 15 years old. As a high school freshman English teacher I understood 15-year-old boys—unless that boy was my own son!) I lost my temper. Frustrated beyond words, I yelled at him. Volume seemed the only way to get his attention, I rationalized. With a withdrawn expression and few words,

his 7:00 AM obligation to prepare the worship slides for that morning (where had I gotten the idea he was irresponsible, anyway?), I apologized. I confessed I had been wrong and pledged with God's help never to speak that way to him again. His eyes softened. "I forgive you," he said. Since that day, God changed my heart. He has taken away my knee-jerk response of frustration and insult when I deal with Nathanael's open-ended (but highly intuitive and creative) personality. God has given me His security to be able to deal with my son as himself instead of as (what I feared was) an example of my flawed parenting. I praise God for His healing in my heart and for granting Nathanael and me a bond of mutual love, enjoyment, and respect.

I had no right to punish my son for my own feelings of failure and helplessness. For those I had Jesus.

Many Commandment-keepers accuse New Covenant Christians of lawlessness. We say the law has been nailed to the cross, they accuse, so we can sin and "do what we want" without guilt.

Proclamation!

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Nathanael grudgingly began scrubbing the bathroom counter.

I calmed down as he completed his chores before finally going to bed without saying "Good-night!"

And then it hit me: an awareness so real and powerful that it felt like a physical weight had landed on me. My heart broke, and I began to cry. Standing there in the kitchen at 10:00 on a Saturday night, I realized that I had been hurting my son. Not just hurting him—deeply wounding him. I had been piercing his sensitive heart with a weapon more damaging than a mere knife—my anger, criticism, and disapproval. I was creating in him a background of resentment that he could only resist by being passive-aggressive.

I knew the Holy Spirit was confronting me, and I could not ignore Him. I had no right to punish my son for my own feelings of failure and helplessness. For those I had Jesus. My son needed me to love him for God, not to make him bear my own shame.

"Please forgive me, God," I prayed as I cried. "Please heal his heart where I have hurt him, and please help me love him for You."

And then came the second awareness—bold, clear, and irresistible. I had to ask Nathanael to forgive me.

The next morning as Nathanael, the leader of the high school media team, got ready to leave for

Nothing could be less true. My encounter with the Holy Spirit in the kitchen that night was an example of New Covenant law at work. The Holy Spirit personally confronted me with my brokenness, and He lovingly and firmly brought me to repentance and restitution.

Further, this particular sin was not one listed in the 10 Commandments. "Fathers [and mothers], do not exasperate your children," admonishes Paul in Ephesians 6:4. New Covenant "law" goes far beyond the outline of the 10 Commandments. Because Jesus died and opened a new, living way to the Father, He can now intimately convict us at any moment through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and he can change our hearts.

The law could never do that.

In this issue McGregor Wright examines what was really nailed to the cross. Richard Goyne reminds us of the central truth of justification by faith, and we will read a report from Greg Taylor of events in Uganda resulting from our assistance to former Adventist pastors two years ago. Stan Ermshar shares his faith story, and Tami Chester tells how "discovering" the Holy Spirit took her from striving to surrender.

As you read, we pray you will discover that when we are in Jesus, we no longer look to an external law as our authority. Instead, the Holy Spirit takes us directly into the presence of God. He convicts and teaches us, and He changes our hearts.



A case study of God's sovereign grace . . .

SOLI DEO GLORIA

STAN ERMSHAR

I am thankful for the privilege of relating my story of God's sovereign grace. It has been 23 years since I realized that I was no longer an Adventist. Now that I have the advantage of looking through my retrospectoscope, I am rejoicing that I had the privilege of growing up Adventist. All the bitterness that comes from being raised in a system of legalistic righteousness has now been taken away in Christ!

Today I am thankful for my Adventist education, the wonderful parents God gave me, and for Marti, the wife God chose for me while I was in medical school. The greatest blessing of all, though, was the day I realized that Christ shed His blood for me and chose me to be His child. He then brought me to a full understanding of the true gospel of grace. When I realized that traditional Adventism was incompatible with that gospel, I had no choice but to leave the church of my youth. I am sharing this story to explain why it was necessary for me to leave Adventism in order to be faithful to the gospel of Christ.

Beginnings

I was born in 1952 in Loma Linda, California. My dad was born into the home of a German immigrant father and had eight siblings, all of whom remained in the Adventist church. My dad and three of his brothers went to Loma Linda University and became physicians. My mom's parents were Adventist missionaries to the Amazon for 27 years. Both my parents were zealous for traditional Adventism. My Dad was like Saul of Tarsus who was advancing in Judaism (Galatians 1:14), except he was advancing in Adventism. As a physician, he

Stan Ermshar is a physician in Irvine, California. He is an avid reader and especially enjoys the reformed theologians. Stan and his wife Marti attend Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa. They share their home with a black standard poodle name Riverfonz, and they praise God for His intervention and healing in their lives.



was interested in health and wrote papers trying to prove that Mrs. White's health message was Biblical. My folks believed everything Ellen wrote came directly from God. Not only did we memorize Bible verses, we also memorized Ellen verses. We followed her dietary advice to the letter.

There was great controversy over whether or not she would approve of sports. I was an avid Dodger baseball fan as a kid. My dad took us to an occasional game, but he was very concerned about Mrs. White's disapproval of professional sports. Finally, one summer he no longer allowed us to listen to the games in the house. That same summer, my missionary granddad (who had baptized me into the Adventist church when I was 12) stayed with us, and he loved baseball! He would take me out to his car where we would listen to the colorful Vin Scully call the Dodger games.

Even though my parents were strict, I admired them for honestly practicing what they believed. Because we did not have a TV in the house, I became interested in astronomy, ham radio, and playing trumpet and piano. My parents provided a good education for us. I have pleasant memories of Camp Wawona and Soquel camp meetings. I did hear the true gospel at these camps from some Adventist ministers who later lost their positions, but I heard a different gospel at Modesto Academy—works righteousness—a gospel that Paul in Galatians 1 said was no gospel at all!

I realized that Christianity stands or falls on the death and resurrection of Jesus. In contrast, it became apparent that Adventism stands or falls on Ellen White's doctrine of 1844 and the Investigative Judgment.

I decided I wanted to be a physician and go to Loma Linda. After studying hard and staying out of trouble at Pacific Union College, I was accepted in 1973 into medical school.

The only "gospel" I heard at Loma Linda was the non-threatening message of Jack Provonsha. To be fair, at that time I had absolutely no interest in Christianity. All I knew was that his gospel was not the same gospel I heard proclaimed at Soquel camp meetings.

In February, 1975, I met Marti, my future wife, at a Friday night potluck. Although she had many different schools to choose from to do her R.N. program, she chose Loma Linda. She was a Lutheran, and her first exposure to Adventism was when she sat down to eat lunch with some other students. When she told them that she was Lutheran, they told her that she had the mark of the beast!

It was Marti who influenced me to go with her to a Seventh-day Adventist Forum presentation by Ron Numbers in May, 1976, when he presented his findings related to his book

Prophetess of Health. I realized then that Ellen's health message was false, but that fact only encouraged me to continue living my life apart from God.

Marti and I married in November, 1980. One month before, on October 22 (the date of the "Great Disappointment"), 1980, the Los Angeles Times headlines screamed, "PLAGIARISM FOUND IN PROPHET BOOKS!" Walter Rea's dramatic findings took up several pages of the front section of the paper. I was stunned!

In the spring of 1981, I attended a forum presentation by Rea at a museum. Walter was amused that he was forced to meet not in a church but in a museum—so we could bury our own 19th century prophetic relic of the past. I got the tapes of that meeting, and one Sabbath afternoon I had the opportunity to play them for my parents. The presentation affected my Dad very deeply, and he admitted he was shaken.

Something missing

By that time, Marti and I had moved to Orange County. I was progressing in my career. We bought a nice home. I thought I had everything! But somehow, it seemed there was something missing in my life. In December, 1982, we took a cruise to Mexico. One night, I was inexplicably drawn to a Gideon Bible in a cabin drawer. I started reading in Matthew, and over several nights I made it to Matthew's account of the Passion. At that moment, I realized that Christ shed His blood and made that sacrifice for me! I could no longer resist, so I surrendered my life to Christ. I made a commitment to God that I would study the Bible with all my heart and follow His leading wherever that might take me.

When we arrived home, a magazine from Desmond Ford's Good News Unlimited just happened to be in the mail. After reading his clear presentation of the gospel, I experienced an intense three-year study of the Bible. I memorized the book of Galatians and read Luther's commentary on that book. I studied all the major doctrines of Adventism.

I realized that Christianity stands or falls on the death and resurrection of Jesus. In contrast, it became apparent that Adventism stands or falls on Ellen White's doctrine of 1844 and the Investigative Judgment. After careful study, I could come to no other conclusion but that this doctrine denies the gospel of grace and assurance. After many sleepless nights and much prayer, I sent my letter of resignation.

Marti and I attended a Seventh-day Baptist church for two years while I studied the Sabbath doctrine. When I concluded that it, too, was un-Biblical, we made the transition to Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa and loved the Bible studies taught by Pastor Chuck Smith.

All of these changes were very hard on my parents. I first shared my findings with my older sister, and she subsequently studied her way out of Adventism and became a Lutheran. This change caused many hard feelings in my parents, not only because I had left the church, but now I had taken my sister with me.

My dad, however (the most honest man I have ever known), was willing to listen. He would at least study the evidence. We had many heated arguments. Over the course of a 10 year, often painful study, he slowly came to the realization that he had been deceived by the Adventist system. All the major pillars of Adventism fell—including the Sabbath which required five years of difficult study. He came to me one day and said, “Son, I have been wrong all these years.” I was overcome with joy and gratitude for this amazing work of grace in my Dad’s heart.

My parents continue to grow in grace. My Mom is still committed to the SDA church, but her highest priority is her love for Jesus, and that is followed by the wonderful love she gives to others. She worships with my Dad at a truly spirit-filled evangelical church in Colton. My heart was filled with joy when I had the opportunity to worship with them this last Mother’s Day, 2005! I thank the Lord everyday for their good health and for the wonderful love they’ve given me through the years.

More real than ever before

In my long journey from Adventism into a Reformed Christian faith, I have now had the opportunity to see how those great doctrines of grace have played out in a practical way. For example, I could not resist God’s electing and atoning grace that night I was saved. Further, I have no problem recognizing my total depravity, and I have experienced God’s preserving grace and His disciplining grace as well.

After being saved, I was very zealous for Bible study and prayer for eight years. Gradually, however, I became caught up in life’s cares. I pursued outside business interests.

Prior to salvation, I had developed an interest in thoroughbred horse racing. I was not interested in gambling as such, but I was fascinated by turning a profit by careful mathematical analysis of the sport. I went back and pursued horse racing again.

I was overtaken by greed, and I wandered far from God. I went to the track on Sundays instead of to church. Our mar-

riage was in serious trouble—but Marti stuck with me through very trying circumstances.

God intervened with His sovereign, disciplining grace, however, and over a seven year period (I was very stubborn) He healed our marriage and brought me back to Himself.

Gradually I became more interested in Bible study. I discovered the Former Adventist Fellowship (FAF) website in 2003 and began reading others’ stories. A major turning point occurred in 2004 when Marti had a serious stroke. Months later, I attended the 2005 Good Friday service with the Redlands FAF group at Trinity church, and that experience sparked a spiritual renewal that has been completely transforming. I now have a passion for Bible study and prayer. I’ve lost my passion for the racetrack. Jesus has become so much more real to me than ever before. He has even restored our marriage and has rekindled my love for Marti anew.

In October, 2004, when Marti had a serious stroke at the age of 50, God illustrated His healing grace in a dramatic way. I was not given much hope for her recovery. They told me to hire a 24-hour caregiver. One night, while hospitalized, when her stroke was extending, Marti thought she was dying. In her anguish, she heard a voice say, “Do not be afraid. I will be with you. Everything is going to be OK!” That truly was the voice of the Lord, as she has made a remarkable recovery in just six months’ time. She is totally independent, except for driving, and she is able to write all the checks, manage the household finances, and balance a checkbook!

When she recovered, we returned to Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa. Pastor Chuck Smith’s sermon title was “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” There was a truly emotional moment when Pastor Chuck sang with the Women of Faith praise group and the audience the beautiful hymn of the sermon title. Tears of joy, praise, and thanksgiving were streaming down our cheeks as we realized that our Lord had indeed been faithful to His promises!

That famous Reformation phrase—*Soli Deo Gloria*—really rings true: To God be the Glory! **!**

As we go to **P R E S S**

General Conference in session at St. Louis

The 58th quinquennial General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is being held in St. Louis, Missouri, as we prepare this issue for publication. The title for the meetings is “Transformed in Christ”

During the three days immediately preceding the meetings and throughout the session, local radio station KJSL, AM 630 which has the largest Christian market in the area, aired interviews with a total of fourteen different former Adventists on the morning Tim and Al Show. Dale Ratzlaff gave an introductory interview on June 20, and the featured guests during the weeks of the GC session included Walter Rae, Verle Streifling,

Jerry Gladson, Mark Martin, Dennis Fischer, Chris Lee, Janice and Ken Brantley, Lydell Oltmans, Colleen Tinker, Rey Cantu, and Jonathan Wolkwitz.

Subjects discussed included Ellen White’s plagiarism, the *Clear Word*, soul sleep and the human spirit, the effect of leaving Adventism on one’s Christian experience, what a person leaving Adventism needs from the Christian community, the problems of Adventist Biblical exegesis, the investigative judgment, and more.

We continue to pray that Adventists in bondage to deception or dishonesty will be rescued by the grace of Jesus and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

R. K. MCGREGOR WRIGHT

The unity of the law

What was “nailed to the cross”?

The occasion

There are several ideas circulating among Bible-believing Christians about the status of something variously referred to as “the law of God,” the “Ten Commandments” or “the rule of life for the believer.” Some Christians argue that these ideas express an overarching relationship between the Law and the Gospel and between the Old and the New Covenants.

In the last few years I have encountered antinomians who teach that the Christian is under no Law at all, having been made “free” from the Law at the cross. This idea becomes part of the “cheap grace” mentality that seems unconcerned with holiness. I have also met postmillennial Reconstructionists who tell me that except for the ceremonial laws which Christ fulfilled, the Law of Moses is still in force in all its detail. These people claim that “the Kingdom is now. We must conquer the world for Jesus by reconstructing our civilization and culture through applying and enforcing the standards of God’s Law,” by which they mean the mosaic system minus the ceremonial elements. Others who worship on Saturday (such as the Seventh-day Adventists or S-D Baptists) claim that the moral law (by which they mean all the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 plus a small selection from the rest of the Mosaic system) still applies to Christians in this age. Others, such as those Presbyterians who worship on Sunday (which they call the Christian Sabbath), still claim that the “moral law” is somehow eternal and must be distinguished from the “civil law” which relates to the Jewish State only, and so doesn’t apply to Christians. It is also supposedly distinct from the “ceremonial law” which was fulfilled by Christ. I also discovered certain Puritan writings which speak of a “Third Use of the Law,” by which they mean that not only is the Law a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ and to tell us what sin is, but that it also provides a means of sanctification, and so functions as the rule of life for the believer.

These are by no means the only possible positions being taught today, but even these few are all seriously incompatible with each other. Some definitions are in order, and some categories need clarifying or questioning. Further, as disturbing as it might be, we must determine whether certain not-fully-recognized presuppositions and axioms control our discussion.

We will also mention related topics such as covenant theology and sabbatarianism, but our main purpose will be

to decide exactly what the status of “the Law” is for the believer today.

Definitions: what counts as “law”?

The term law (*torah*) in the Old Testament means a variety of things, primarily the many laws of the Mosaic Covenant, either considered separately or viewed as a whole. It is also a convenient synonym for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, called the Pentateuch. Further, it is a general term for the Old Covenant itself, as it defined the life and constitution of God’s people as a nation. It also seems in many passages to be a synonym for the Word of God as a whole (God’s *debar*), and corresponds roughly to the idea of the Wisdom of God revealed (*sophia*), or the Logos, the mind of God as revealed to mankind (the *logos* as law or *nomos*). All these ideas and usages appear in the New Testament (or Covenant) also, as they were part of the common thinking about the Law in first century Judaism.

By the time of Jesus, Judaism had developed a concept of Tradition viewed as the living voice of the Rabbinate handed down from ancient times. The application of the OT laws was not always completely clear, so the Jews developed a tradition of sanctified commonsense to “Throw a fence around the Law” in order to define its limits and cases. For example, it was not enough to know that we must not work on the Sabbath days, for what counted as work? Was picking up a knife dropped during a meal work? Was stripping a handful of wheat to munch while walking in a field to be included in the work of harvesting? The rabbis said that the first was not work, while the second was. Pulling a sheep from a well-pit on the Sabbath was excusable, but the healing tasks of a physician were not, for they were work (Mat 12).

All legalisms (ethical schemes teaching salvation or sanctification by Law) must develop a “Talmud,” a system of traditions to explain how to apply the laws. The Jewish traditions, eventually encoded as the written Talmud, detailed the possible answers to these types of questions, and the recorded arguments of the main schools of such famous rabbis as Shammei, Hillel, and Gamaliel, showed on what ethical principles one could make these distinctions safely.

One of the principle sources of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership of his day was about the validity of these traditional interpretations. There was no question between Jesus and the Rabbinate about which books were in the Canon, or about the absolutely binding character of God’s written code, but the Jews viewed their Holy Tradition as having substantially the same authority as the Law of Moses itself. In fact, this oral tradition was considered the authoritative interpretation without which the “true meaning” of the whole OT text could not be known. The Pharisees taught that this Tradition was the “Light of the World” in which light the Law was to be read. Naturally, when Jesus said that He was the Light of the World, they immediately understood that He was claiming authority to teach the Law of God independently of

the rabbinical traditions. This claim was one of several He made which effectively guaranteed His fate.

The threefold division of the law

Traditional discussion of the Law divided the many specific laws into three classes: the moral, the civil, and the ceremonial laws. This threefold classification stems from the exegesis of the early Middle Ages. It remains an integral part of the ongoing discussion of the theological significance of the Ten Commandments and of catechetical teachings. It can hardly be denied that these three distinct kinds of laws are actually found in the mosaic system. Clearly, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” is a moral commandment, the Passover sacrifice is a ceremony, and the laws of inheritance making daughters equal to sons is a civil law.

The Moral Law was early equated with the Ten Commandments brought down from Sinai by Moses. They were supposed to be distinguished from the body of the laws by being written by the finger of God on the tablets, by being themselves a summary of the whole Law in principle, and by being a direct reflection of the character of God himself. For example, it was argued that the weekly Sabbath prescribed in the fourth commandment was somehow innate to God’s character, that this Sabbath rest goes back to creation itself when God “rested” on the seventh day. Other Sabbaths of the mosaic system, such as the 49-year Jubilee cycle of years, were arbitrary and prescriptive; God himself did not take a year off and rest every 49 years, but the Jews had to. The Ten Commandments were also subdivided into the first table, laws one to four, conditioning our love of God, and the second table, laws five to ten, defining our relation of love towards our fellow man. In this way, the Ten Commandments defined the two greatest commandments, love of God and love of our fellows.

This subdivision of the Ten Commandments only reinforced the idea that they represented the moral character of God

The Pharisees taught that this Tradition was the “Light of the World” in which light the Law was to be read. Naturally, when Jesus said that He was the Light of the World, they immediately understood that He was claiming authority to teach the Law of God independently of the rabbinical traditions.

more than the rest of the laws did. This impression was partly created by the nature of the "first table," and partly by traditional inattention to the relation of the ten to all the other commandments. In addition, this subdivision also reinforced the opinion that the Sabbath rest of the fourth command is somehow a "moral" law. If it is asked why the principle of atonement by sacrifice is not just as much intrinsic to the divine nature as other moral principles embodied in the laws of Moses, the usual answer is that the "ceremonial laws" were fulfilled in the death of the Messiah. But the same texts that prove this fulfillment also prove the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments, of the "moral Law."

The arbitrariness of these schemes of classification can be exposed merely by asking, But Why is the Sabbath law a "moral" law while the laws of the Jubilee are only ceremonial or civil laws? Are they not also part of the Sabbaths of the mosaic system? Why should anyone think that the original Sabbath was a "moral" law in the first place?

We know today from archaeology that Moses' two tablets were not two parts of the law, but two copies, each copy containing all Ten Commandments. The mosaic covenant was modeled after the Middle Eastern suzerainty treaties of the time. These treaties or covenants contained the same main divisions that the Law of Moses contains, including an opening statement about the inviolate sovereignty of the ruling king and of his gods, followed by a set of laws governing the lives of the people. Then came lists of curses and blessings to follow submission or rebellion. When a conqueror or king made a covenant with another city-state, two identical copies of the basic laws of the covenantal code would be made, one to be placed in the temple archives of the ruling king, and the other to be placed in the temple of the subject nation. Often, a summary of the covenant was inscribed on a stela, or stone monument, and erected in the presence of the subject gods within the subject peoples' temple precincts, for all to read. In the case of the giving of the Law of God to his own people, the two copies were both placed in the ark in the tabernacle (the double witness of Deut 19:15), along with the pot of manna to show God's care and protection of his people, and Aaron's rod that budded, showing God's right to judge through his appointed prophets and priests. These testimonies to the sins of the people resting in the ark below the mercy seat amounted in practice to four witnesses, twice the necessary minimum. There are, in fact, no grounds for assuming that Moses' two tablets corresponded to the traditional assumption that the first represented man's duty to God and the second represented man's duty to man.

Scribes made further copies of the Law in its entirety on parchment, and the priests read them to the people, while the King had his own copy. God's suzerainty treaty was not made with conquered foreign subjects but with his own people. His Law was the whole text, of which the Ten Commandments were but the opening summary paragraph. The Jews were therefore right to refer to the Pentateuch as a whole by the term "The Law."

We may further ask Why any particular law is ceremonial rather than moral, or civil rather than ceremonial? Can it be reasonably claimed that while Deuteronomy 6:5 about loving God and man is a moral law, verses 7-9 about teaching the Law to your offspring is not moral? Is it civil or ceremonial? Why could it not be all three? But if it is all three, so is the law of the weekly Sabbath also all three. This analysis, however, wreaks havoc with the traditional classification scheme. Many among the over 600 laws in the Pentateuch defy the traditional classification. This fact alone shows that the traditional threefold division is just a rough guide, not an intrinsic property of the Law itself. No such division is described in the OT text itself, but there are dozens of occurrences of the singular word *torah* referring to the Law as a whole, suggesting that the OT writers saw the Law as a covenantal unity. Dozens of contexts seem to require this understanding.

The real motivation for the threefold classification is that the NT teaches that the Law was fulfilled in Christ. This teaching presents a problem, however, for those who believe that the moral law was not fulfilled at all, that it is still applicable to everyone in all ages, and that Christ only fulfilled the ceremonial laws. If Christ fulfilled the whole law, however, does that not mean the Ten Commandments were also fulfilled on the cross? Nobody argues that Christians should be sacrificing lambs each day, but what about the fourth commandment? Is it moral instead of ceremonial because it is in the Ten Commandments?

In other words, the traditional threefold division of the Law is intended to buttress the view that only part of the Law was fulfilled by Christ in his redemptive work. The rest remains for us to live by. According to this reasoning, the ten commandments are "the rule of life for the believer's sanctification," thus defining the Puritan's "third use of the Law" beyond the two functions of 1), showing us what sin is, and 2), leading us to Christ. The Bible makes no such reference to a "third use" of the Law.

The traditional threefold division also paves the way for all sorts of legalisms, from the relatively harmless idea that Sunday is "the Christian Sabbath" (for which there is no evidence in the NT), to the more divisive Seventh-day Adventist (or SD Baptist) position that if the Sabbath is part of God's eternal moral character, it can never have been abrogated and must, therefore, be the only right day of worship. Historically, Adventist doctrine has reinforced this view by identifying Sunday-keeping as "the mark of the Beast." Although many claim no longer to accept this idea, it nevertheless remains an official denominational tenet. The Adventist polemic quite correctly points out that there is nothing in the NT to suggest that God changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, and in fact it was merely a church tradition to do so, confirmed by the Pope of Rome a few centuries later. There seems to be no question that if "the Ten Commandments apply to us," and God never altered the Sabbath to Sunday, we absolutely should be worshiping on

Saturday, for no other "Sabbath" is known to Scripture. Do we believe in *sola Scriptura*, or not?

My conclusion is that protestant "Sabbatarians" are not real Sabbatarians at all; they are just Sunday-worshippers who think that Sunday is "the Christian Sabbath." In fact, it is my opinion that the traditional threefold division of the Law of Moses leads naturally to the Seventh-day Adventist position.

Presuppositions control everything

There is always a sure-fire method of criticizing a position that seems to have both "the facts" and "logic" in its favor. All we need to do to demolish the theory is to question its presuppositions. If the assumptions are wrong, the whole system is wrong, and all conclusions drawn from it are suspect. More facts and more logic cannot help us here, for presuppositions control an argument in much the same way as the International Rules determine what counts as a valid move in the game of chess.

But first another consideration must be attended to. When Reformed theologians stated in the Westminster Confession Of Faith that "the true and full sense of any scripture... is not manifold, but one" (I:9), they were repudiating the mediaeval theory that held every scripture to have three or four "senses."

The "fourfold sense" of scripture

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Bible was universally interpreted in four ways. Every word, every doctrine, every phrase, every story and parable was deemed to have the traditional Four Senses. Virtually all exegesis and preaching regularly asked four questions of the text:

1) What is its literal, or grammatical-historical meaning? In this first and most obvious sense, the word Jerusalem means the city of that name in Palestine.

2) Secondly, what is its allegorical, or spiritual sense? Allegorism was a transformist technique. By using metaphors and similes, the exegete could claim that behind or above the literal meaning was a more "spiritual" significance, supposedly hidden in the text but accessible to the learned. This technique made it possible to apply endless speculation, largely derived from Holy Tradition. So the word Jerusalem also meant the Catholic Church.

3) Thirdly, what was the analogical, or moral sense of this text, word, phrase, etc.? This notion attempted not only to convey what a text meant in its own day and context but also to forge a link with the moral life of the people of God and with each hearer. Today we would call this "bringing out the practical application" of the text. The assumption behind this analysis is that the whole of the Word of God in all its parts "has a message for today." The Puritans in their detailed sermons and commentaries certainly never left a text before drawing out a number of uses or moral applications of its doctrine for their hearers.

Jerusalem, therefore, was thought to stand morally for the redeemed soul as it grows in grace while resisting the World,

the Flesh, and the Devil. John Bunyan might have been reflecting this sense when he spoke of the "City of Mansoul" being besieged in his allegorical story of The Holy War.

4) Finally, many (but by no means all) mediaeval interpreters held to a fourth anagogical sense. This odd word comes from a Greek verb meaning "going upwards," and this final "sense" of the text supposedly encouraged the believer upward towards God in worship and ultimately, to heaven itself. Jerusalem, then, also means Heaven.

The problem with these four "senses" is their total arbitrariness. The allegorical sense, for example, is nothing but a declaration that X actually "means" Y, whether the original writer could have thought so or not. There are five basic reasons for these mediaeval assertions:

1) There is the unspoken (and illogical) assumption that a symbolic similarity between signs "really" means identity, and so identifies a true meaning.

2) The fallacy of "identity" is then combined with a loose use of real Biblical symbolic correspondences such as typology, in which, for example, the Passover lamb typologically represents (and points to) the death of Jesus.

3) In addition, mediaeval scholars manipulated their hearers by teaching that the literal sense of the text is somehow merely fleshly and is therefore insufficient to meet the needs of God's people. A further meaning called "spiritual" must be found, too.

4) The early church Fathers first discovered the usefulness of allegorism in the secular philosophical writers, especially the Stoics. By using allegory, a writer could make Homer's myths, for example, seem full of spiritual meaning and could make Homer seem to be a philosopher.

5) The final ground for the acceptance of multiple arbitrarily chosen meanings is that for over fourteen centuries of the Middle Ages, preachers and commentators used this catholic method of Bible interpretation. Holy Tradition, consequently, standardized the Four Senses.

This method of arbitrary interpretation is self-justifying. Holy Tradition was built on this method of exegesis, and where the authority of Holy Tradition is concerned, mere illustration becomes proof. Anyone foolhardy enough to deny this



We know today from archaeology that Moses' two tablets were not two parts of the law, but two copies, each copy containing all Ten Commandments.

assumption was thought to be of a fleshly, literal temperament, and was probably a heretic to boot.

Despite its obvious problems (of which sheer arbitrariness is the most serious), the allegorical method of understanding the Bible greatly strengthened the notion that the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday, that the term "Sabbath" in fact meant not only

- 1) the original literal seventh-day sabbath, but also
- 2) the spiritual sabbath, "proved" by allegorism to be Sunday,
- 3) the rest of the soul in Christ, the moral rest of sanctification as we grow in grace, and finally,
- 4) the anagogical rest of heaven itself.

Needless to say, verses like Hebrews 4:9, "There remains therefore a rest [i.e., a Sabbath-keeping] for the people of God," can be used to confirm any or all of these "senses" of the text. We need to recall that in Catholic thinking, the purpose of the Bible is to confirm and illustrate Holy Tradition, not to supply doctrine by itself. The Bible cannot be understood by itself, but only as part of Holy Tradition, which includes the Fourfold Sense of every text. The circularity of this argument should be obvious.

This kind of traditionalist interpretation made it easy to accept that for truly spiritual people, the Sabbath really meant Sunday. By allegorism a verse can be made to teach anything at all even without direct Biblical support.

We must now answer the question of what exactly it was that was "nailed to the cross" when Jesus died? This phrase appears in Col 2:14.

Jesus the incarnate Torah

This expression, the incarnate *Torah*, simply translates the idea of the incarnate *Logos* into the main corresponding Hebrew word. The *Torah* was a verbal revelation of the mind of God, of which the over 600 separate commands of the Pentateuch were just a fraction. Jesus incarnated the fullness of God's purposes not just for Himself, but for the whole world as the eventual scope of His Kingdom. All that Adam lost in the Fall, Jesus would regain redemptively for his people. He was the Second Adam, the Image of God *par excellence*. All that Adam might have had he not fallen, Jesus was to become as God's Messiah. Just as nature fell along with Adam, so nature would also be redeemed in Christ's Kingdom. The drama of redemption would finally extend "Far as the Curse is found," as Isaac Watts puts it in his famous hymn "Joy to The World"

When Jesus went to the cross, he took a perfectly fulfilled Torah with him. His life was the perfect expression of what Torah was in its innermost essence. As creator of the Sabbath, he was Lord of the Sabbath, but as the Second Adam, he fully obeyed God's Law as he read it in the books of Moses. He is the only man in history to have been able to say to the Pharisees, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" and still keep a straight face!

In Romans 12:1-2 we find an exhortation explaining what true spiritual worship is; we are to present our bodies to God as "a living sacrifice." This is how we are to walk the path of the "newness of life" that our baptism set forth (Rom 6:3-4). To present our bodies is to present our all, for in the New Covenant, our individual bodies are the residences of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), and corporately, we who are individually inhabited by the Spirit of God are the temple in which God literally tabernacles on earth (2 Corinthians 3:16-17). By presenting our bodies we express surrender to the Spirit of Jesus who works through us those "good works which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:8-10). This surrender of our bodies to the Holy Spirit is not the equivalent of receiving a supernatural ability to keep the Law. Rather, we experience the risen Christ indwelling us by His own Spirit—the Living Law—to give us the very mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:9-16) by which we are "transformed by the renewing of [our] minds." When we surrender ourselves to Jesus fully, our bodies become sacrifices of praise as the Holy Spirit does the work of God in and through us. We no longer rely on or answer to an external law; we respond moment by moment to the Author of the law Himself who is dwelling in us. Reformed theology calls this process *sanctification*, or "growth in grace" (2 Pet 3:18).

The point is, we offer the body to God that he might live in and express His eternal purpose through it (Phil 2:13), just as He lived and expressed his eternal purpose through the body of Christ: "A body hast Thou prepared for me . . . to do Thy will, O God" (Heb 10:5-7). This verse in Hebrews is not a NT novelty, but a midrash or commentary on Psalm 40:6-8. In other words, the Jesus of Hebrews was the Torah incarnate.

Therefore, when the nails pierced his sinless hands, the entire fulfilled Torah, the Law of God in its entirety, was "nailed to the cross" (Col 2:14-15). Some have tried to argue that when Paul said that "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us" was nailed to the cross, he meant only to include the hundreds of civil and ceremonial laws in the Pentateuch and not the "moral law" of the Ten Commandments. But the word for "ordinances" is the usual Greek word (*dogmata*) for the authoritative proclamation of a ruler declaring his laws to the people (Lk 2:1). The term "handwriting" (*cheirographon*) clearly refers to God's writing the Ten Commandments on the tablets with his own "finger" (Ex 31:18, 32:15-16, and Deut 9:10, etc.).

Colossians 2 offers the clearest proof that the entire law is a unity. After declaring that the Law was nailed to the cross, Paul continues to specify laws of the mosaic covenant which do not apply to the Christian, including the laws of "food and drink," of "holy days," of the "new moon," and of "a Sabbath day." In this clarification Paul includes not only the food laws commonly recognized as part of the "ceremonial" laws, but by listing the feasts in the classic order of "yearly" (holy days), "monthly" (new moon), and "weekly" (a Sabbath day—NIV, NASB), he states that not only the Jewish festivals but also the weekly Sabbath were

mere shadows of Christ (Col. 2:17). In other words, laws often designated “ceremonial” and also the weekly Sabbath (often designated “moral” because of its inclusion in the Ten Commandments) were equally nailed to the cross.

Jesus also held that the Law was a unit. Not only did He hold that to break “the least of these commandments” is to break the lot (Mat 5:18-20, cf. also Jas 2:10), but He also held that all the mass of the commandments depends on the two “greatest” commandments, love of God and love of man (Matt. 22:40). None of this makes any sense unless the law is a moral unity. It makes no difference to this argument that some laws are more “civil” than “moral.” All the Law is included.

The only appropriate conclusion is that the whole of the Law in its detailed entirety was “nailed to the cross,” abolished for the Christian in this age, and replaced by a new “Covenant.”

If, then, the entire Law including the Ten Commandments was abolished with the passing of the Old Covenant, what law directs the Christian's life? Does not the claim that the Ten Commandments have also been fulfilled in Christ lead to antinomianism?

New covenant law

Although the Bible contains accounts of several covenants governing the relation between God and man in various ages, the covenants which mainly affect the Church's discussions today are the Mosaic (called the Old Covenant in the New Testament), and the New Covenant that replaced it through the work of Christ. Hebrews declares that the Law of Moses and Aaron has been replaced by a new covenant, of which the High Priest is Jesus “after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 5:6+10, and the argument of chapter 7), of whose priesthood the Mosaic Covenant said nothing. The Aaronic priests could not continue forever because they died, but Jesus' Mechizedekian Priesthood devolved upon one Man who “continues forever” through his resurrection. It is therefore “an untransmissible priesthood” (*aparabaton*) and is never to be passed to another (Heb 7:24).

The Mosaic Law is said to be “weak,” “useless,” “disannulled,” and unable to make anything “perfect,” or spiritually mature (Heb 7:18-19), being merely a “shadow” of “a better covenant,” the old being “decayed, grown old, and ready to disappear” (7:22, 8:5-6+13). If it be objected that all this is said only of the civil and ceremonial laws and does not include the Ten Commandments, we need only note that in Exodus 34:28, the Ten Commandments written on the tablets are themselves said to be the words of the Covenant. It is therefore self-contradictory to claim on the one hand that the Ten Commandments are a “summary” of the whole Law, expressing the “essence” of the whole law, and then to claim on the other hand that when the Law was fulfilled by Christ in his Person and Work, the Ten Commandments were not included because they are somehow more “moral” than the rest. It was precisely their moral significance that caused them to condemn sinners; they were “against us and hostile to us” (Col 2).

An Irresistible Result: If the Ten Commandments are themselves the Old Covenant, then everything in Hebrews about the abolition of the Old Covenant applies equally to them also. Hebrews therefore teaches that the Mosaic Ten Commandments have been abolished and replaced by the New Covenant.

But the question still remains: What law, if any, governs the believer's life in this age? To refuse to face this question is to slip unavoidably into antinomianism.

God's provision of new covenant law

The New Covenant Scriptures answer this question in the clearest possible language. The moral law governing the Christian's life is the “commandments of Christ,” the New Testament teaching of

the Messenger of the New Covenant. In the prophets, those people included in the New Covenant are identified as those who “all know the Lord,” having the Law “written on their heart” (Jer 31:33-34). In the New Testament, this inner dynamic is variously called “the circumcision made without hands” in Colossians 2:11, “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” in Romans 8:2, the “law of faith” in Romans 3:27, the “royal law,” and the “law of liberty” in James 2:8 and 12, and “my commandments” in John 14:15 and 21, 15:10 and 12, “the commandment of us the apostles and of the Lord and Savior” in 2 Peter 3:2, “the commandments of the Lord” in 1 Corinthians 14:37, and “his [Christ's] commandments” in 1 John 2:3-4, 3:22,23, and 24, 5:2-3, and 2 John 6, and Revelation 14:12. And this is but a sample of the relevant verses.

New Covenant Law is therefore simply the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, the law written on the heart by God's sovereign regeneration. That is, it is the text of the New Testament (the New Covenant) itself, supported by the spiritual dynamic of the resurrection life of Christ in the believer. The New Testament text replaces the Mosaic Law of the Old Covenant in its entirety, and when the believer reads this text, the Holy Spirit instantly witnesses to its truth and opens up a path of obedience. Further, anything in the OT text that God wants to apply to the Christian today must do so by passing through



When Jesus went to the cross, he took a perfectly fulfilled Torah with him. His life was the perfect expression of what Torah was in its innermost essence.

the filter of NT teaching. In the meantime, the Hebrew text of "the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets," (Jesus' OT Canon), remains forever the inspired Word of God in its every "jot and tittle" (Mat 5:18). The Old Covenant is not, however, the believer's direct rule of life like it once was. That role is now filled by the New Testament text itself as it is imprinted on the believer's heart and mind by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The fact that the New Covenant includes many moral commands of Christ also disproves the Antinomianism referred to in the opening paragraphs. It is not true that the believer is not obligated to any moral commands at all, for the Lord Jesus himself addresses us in just such moral commands. This is what gives content to what I have called for want of any better term, "New Covenant law." On the other hand, the Reconstructionists who teach that the entire Law of Moses, including its entire civil and moral content in all its detail, is not only in force today, and must be enforced by a Christian government upon the whole U.S. population, cannot get around the fact that the entire Law as a unit was "nailed to the cross," having been completely satisfied by the Lamb of God in his bodily incarnation and life (Col 2:9+14). Jesus as the Incarnate *Torah* exhibited a righteousness of his own merit, which is then imputed in its entirety to each believer for whom Christ died.

Conclusions

It makes no difference to the above argument that much of the teaching of the Old Testament is repeated or otherwise validated by the New Testament text, or that a modern government can still get guidance and wisdom in formulating its own legal system from the mosaic system. The point is that the Old Covenant Law including the Ten Commandments are not the Christian's rule of life. They have no more power to sanctify now than they ever had, and therefore the weekly Sabbath of the fourth commandment is no more binding on the believing church of this age than are the rest of the mosaic laws. To return to dependence on them is the very apostasy that the letter to the Hebrews argues against (to say nothing of Galatians). We do not need the "weak and useless" laws of Moses (Heb 7:18), for we have the commandments of a risen Savior with whom we are right now spiritually united in his resurrection life.

There is nothing in the New Testament to prevent the SDA denomination from worshiping on Saturday if they wish, but to make the day a test of fellowship or a symbol

of salvation or loyalty to Christ is completely unbiblical. Further, to condemn other Christians for worshipping on Sunday (or Tuesday for that matter) is an unfortunate legalism at best, and may be associated with a heresy at worst. To claim that Sunday worship is now (or ever will be) "the Mark of the Beast" is just an idiosyncratic absurdity, one of those curiosities of eschatological speculation beloved of the less perceptive historicist commentators on the Book of Revelation. There is of course, no ground for such a notion in the Bible.

Further, the Sabbatarianism of those who claim that Sunday must be governed by similar types of restrictions as the Jewish Sabbath quickly slip into legalism as well. Legalists, in fact, never manage to obey consistently even the laws they do approve. They all come under those many judgments of the New Testament that "we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman" (Gal 4:31), for "as many who are of the works of the Law are under a curse" (3:10-12) for "the Law is not of faith." Paul meant what he said: "the letter kills" (2 Cor 3:6).

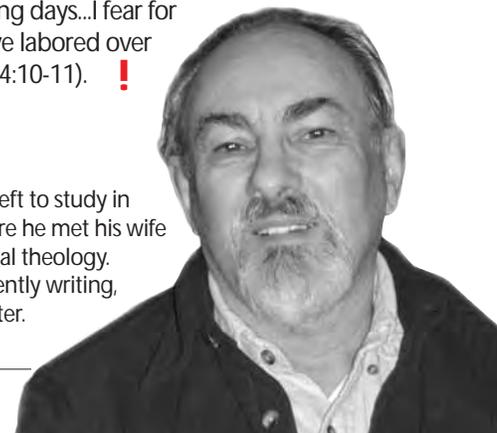
Under the New Covenant, the problems of what day to keep and how to keep it provide their own refutation. When it comes to deciding which legalistic details we are willing to accept, like the old maps used to say, "There be dragons!" The Christian dare not let him or herself be judged "in respect of Sabbath days" of any kind (Col 2:16-17). Paul was clear that a believer in Christ has been set free and must not allow him/herself to be bound again "by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Jesus Himself has become our rule of faith and practice, and the words of the New Testament (Covenant) reveal that rule to us. As children born of God (John 1:12) we have the witness of the Holy Spirit testifying to our spirits that we are God's children and heirs (Romans 8:15-17). This heritage means that we have the intercession of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27) and the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:14-16) to teach us and empower us to live by His rules and promptings instead of by an external law which has no hope of restraining our natural impulses (Rom 8:3, Col 2:20-23).

The Holy Spirit writes the New Covenant law on our hearts. Jesus has fulfilled all regulations and requirements for righteousness, and He has replaced the law in our lives.

The Apostle to the Gentiles must be allowed to have the last word: "You are observing days...I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain" (Galatians 4:10-11). !

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"The believer no longer needs to fear a decision to be announced at the last judgment because God has already decided to account him justified and righteous for Christ's sake."

Reflections on Justification by **faith**

RICHARD GOYNE

In past issues of *Proclamation!* there have been noteworthy articles by various authors dealing with such pertinent topics as the liberating power of the gospel, the Sabbath, the investigative judgment, and the authenticity of Ellen White's writings. As important as these topics may be, there is one doctrine which above all others needs to be plainly taught because it is so pivotal to Christian beliefs. That is the doctrine of justification by faith, which is more fully expressed as "justification by God's grace through the believer's faith in Christ."

It was his commitment to this doctrine that gave the ministry of Martin Luther a degree of success which previous attempts to work reform had been unable to attain. For three centuries before Luther, there had been efforts to initiate reforms in the Catholic Church. Peter Waldo, Francis of Assisi, Wycliffe, Has and Savonarola had tried in some way to correct prevalent errors and abuses without lasting success.

The salient points of Luther's message were the authority of Scripture and the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther derived from Scripture. "For therein [in the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).¹ Like the Apostle Paul, Luther taught that the repentant sinner is justi-

fied in God's sight by grace alone without any other merit than his faith in Christ's saving merit.² "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

The sanctified life, or sanctification, of the repentant one who has been justified (declared righteous) by God because of his faith in Christ is manifested by his subsequent good works, but such good works are the result of his justification and not a component of it. "Being justified freely by his (God's) grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

To Luther the doctrine of justification by faith was the summary of all Christian teaching upon which the church stands or falls.³ It teaches us that a merciful God justifies the sinner who repents so that he can live out his days with peaceful assurance by his faith in Christ Jesus. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

The believer no longer needs to fear a decision to be announced at the last judgment because God has already decided to account him justified and righteous for Christ's sake. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

The Christian thereafter endeavors to lead a righteous life because he has been forgiven, but he is not forgiven because of his attempts to lead a righteous life. Any good deeds that he performs are evidence of his gratitude to God for the freedom from guilt that he enjoys because of his faith in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. Saying, blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered" (Romans 4:6,7).

Such was the doctrine of justification by faith as taught by Luther and the other major reformers of the sixteenth century. The Roman Catholic Church responded to this teaching with a statement on the subject by the Council of Trent (Section IV, January 1547). The Council anathematized (reject-

It is evident that by making perfect obedience to the commandments a requirement for salvation, the effort made by the individual to attain such obedience makes his salvation depend in part upon human effort and not solely by faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

ed) the proposition "that justification once received is not preserved and increased by good works; but that those good works are only the fruits and signs of justification, and not causes of its increase."⁴ So the lines of conflict were drawn on the role of good works in salvation.

The Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church state that "Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and are delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified—and given the power to lead a holy life." (F.B. 10)⁵ This statement must be considered along with the Adventist doctrines of probation and the investigative judgment.

In Adventism the sinner is pardoned when he repents and confesses Christ as his Savior. He is then given the grace to obey the commandments and live a holy life. He will, however, live in a state of probation (subject to a period of testing and trial to ascertain fitness). The record of his sins will not be blotted out but will be kept in the heavenly records until he faces the investigative judgment which will determine his eternal destiny based upon his use, or misuse, of the grace given to him (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 421, 422).

It is evident that by making perfect obedience to the commandments a requirement for salvation, the effort made by the individual to attain such obedience makes his salvation depend in part upon human effort and not solely by faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice. The commandments, meanwhile, are made an ongoing legal restraint.

Such is the Adventist doctrine of justification. It is akin to the error which Luther opposed: the doctrine of salvation by faith plus works. Luther and his fellow Reformers taught *sola fides* (faith only) as the key to salvation. So did the Apostle Paul who wrote, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

One result of the Adventist teaching about salvation has been that many give up their Christian experience, knowing that they will never be able to attain the perfection that Adventist doctrine requires. Many more live out their lives trying to perfect their characters in preparation for the investigative judgment.

Those who are discouraged and tempted to give up should remember, "Therefore he (Christ) is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:15NIV). The many who seek salvation by the keeping of commandments and perfecting their characters should consider "...the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Romans 4:6).

And we can all take comfort in the words of Paul, "For by grace are you saved by faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

It may be difficult for someone who has been indoctrinated in a faith plus works doctrine of salvation to grasp the Biblical teaching that we are saved solely by God's grace through our faith in Christ. It will not be easy for such a person to understand that "If by grace then it is no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace..." (Romans 11:6).

In our humanity we are prone to bring to God the fruits of our own labors as an offering. Those so inclined should carefully study the words of the apostles in a modern translation of the Bible (not a paraphrase). They will find there, among other truths, "That if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). **!**

Endnotes

1. Biblical quotes are from the King James Version, except where noted.
2. _____, *The Augsburg Confession*, Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1980 ed.
3. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia Fortress Press, p. 224
4. _____, *Document of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, second ed., p. 263
5. _____, *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, Church Manual Revision, 1980

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From striving to surrender CONTINUED FROM BACK

Through all life's circumstances, however, God kept loving me and continued to pursue me. Although I ran from even the mention of His name, He still had a plan for my life. A little over 10 years ago, after much resistance, I finally accepted an invitation to start a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. What joy flooded my heart as I accepted the free gift of salvation paid for on the cross! Little did I know that my troubles were just starting!

Now that I was "born again" I wanted to do everything right. I set out working to be the "best" Christian I could possibly be. Although I now believed that God loved me and had forgiven my sins (past, present and future), deep in my heart a root of unbelief was still hidden. That unbelief prevented me from being able to completely accept that God loved me **JUST THE WAY I WAS**, that nothing I did could make Him love me more, and that I couldn't earn His approval. I would read scriptures that taught this truth; I would say I believed. I even taught others about God's unconditional love. Yet the truth of God's love had not yet rooted out my **STRIVING**.

Those wonderful "S" words! (**SURRENDER** and **SPIRIT** – as in the Holy Spirit!)

I finally learned about the Holy Spirit. As an Adventist, the "Holy Ghost" was a spooky, spiritualistic phantom to me, a presence with whom I had better be careful about getting too involved unless I wanted to be seen as one of those bizarre, fanatic "holy roller" types (you know, shouting "Hallelujahs" and speaking in tongues!). He certainly wasn't my Counselor, Comforter, Teacher, Guide, or Friend. After being born again, I began to read about the Holy Spirit's importance in a believer's life, yet somehow a personal relationship with Him continued to elude me. I was too busy working hard to earn God's approval. After all, wasn't pleasing God the most important thing I could put my time and energies toward as a believer? Yet the harder I worked to earn God's approval, the more church and outreach activities in which I involved myself, the harder I tried to live a holy and righteous life—the more I seemed to fail. My life produced fewer results; I became more frustrated—and finally burnout set in.

One day God began to reveal to me that I had placed His precious Spirit in a place of insignificance and inferiority in my life. Somehow in my mind the Holy Spirit was a "lesser" being, the third person at the bottom of the Trinity "hierarchy". All that mattered to me was that I please God the Father, because to me He was #1. In spite of my theological misunderstandings and constant **STRIVING**, God began to reveal to me through His Word that if I would seek to **SURRENDER** myself to the Holy Spirit, He would transform my life. It was exciting yet scary as I began to realize that God had given me the indescribable privilege and honor of presenting my body to the Holy Spirit to be His "home" here on earth.

Being the thrill seeker I am, I decided to take a chance! A scripture from Romans 12:1 (taken from two different Bible versions) became my daily prayer:

"Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering." (*The Message*)

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (NIV)

From that day forward I have daily offered all of myself to the Holy Spirit. I now choose to walk in **SURRENDER** to Him so that He can live

I'm done with STRIVING! I now understand that pleasing God requires SURRENDER.

through me the life that pleases Him, which in turn is pleasing to God. I'm done with **STRIVING**! I now understand that pleasing God requires **SURRENDER**. It's so simple, yet my wrong understanding of God and His Word had made it so complicated! I now look constantly to the Holy Spirit to teach me, guide me, counsel me, comfort me, empower me, prompt me, and bear much eternal fruit through me. And because of my surrender to Jesus and His Spirit, God **IS** pleased with me.

I am so grateful and humbled to know Jesus and have the Holy Spirit in charge of my life. My prayer is that you, too, will come to know the fruit that can only come from a fully surrendered life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). **!**

W E B sites of interest

www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

Includes letters, ministry news, free downloads, and access to LAM Publications' online book resource site.

www.SDAoutreach.org

Study materials written by former Adventist pastor J. Mark Martin. Downloadable audio messages are also available.

www.EllenWhite.org

Large collection of information concerning the Seventh-day Adventist prophet and leader Ellen G. White.

www.FormerAdventist.com

Features testimonies of former Adventists, Bible studies, and a discussion forum.

Two gospels

Just wanted to say thank you for being willing to publish your own “two-gospel” doctrinal view of the Bible in this May/June 2005 issue of *Proclamation!* That was truly outstanding to see just how you would proclaim “Two Gospels”—one for the OT and one for the NT—without even cracking a snicker!! Usually I have my children read your magazine issues – but this one was just too good to pass up! We are all having a wonderful time with it. In past I have had some opportunity to compare the Bible against some of things you print with people in our local Adventist church, pointing to specific *Proclamation!* articles as an illustration of just how far away from sound exegesis an SDA-bashing publication can get if it really tries. But this 11 page “Two-Gospel” approach to the OT and NT just published is truly a gold mine!

My “usual” venue for Bible discussion outside of our local church is with evangelical denominations on their Bible message boards. There I find a lot of thoughtful Bible-based challenges to Adventism as well as some not-so-well thought out ideas. But most of them are certainly put forward in love and genuine Christian interest in Bible teachings. What a contrast it is to jump from that venue to reading your publication!! Just wanted to say again – how much I appreciate your being willing to say what you do in print for all to read and then contrast to scripture.

After reading your diatribe followed by reading D.L. Moody’s presentation on the Ten Commandments, I go with D.L. Moody all the way, my brother! What an outstanding man of God he must have been! He brings up some of the very same Bible based, exegetically sound points of scripture in favor of God’s Word and His UNIT of TEN that I have used on the evangelical message boards! What a great resource for Christians of ALL denominations to read!

Editor’s note:

Please read the article “The Unity of the Law” by McGregor Wright in this issue for a detailed answer written by an evangelical Biblical scholar with no Adventist background of his own.

Ten commandments not “the law”

Kudos for “The Great Divide”: Dale might have added that ever since Gen-Deut were

complete, all Jews—including Bible writers—have called them collectively “the Torah” which in English is “the law”. Abraham is not mentioned in the Ten Commandments, of course. The Ten Commandments are not the law, but merely a tiny portion of it. In fact, the term “Ten Commandments” never occurs again in the entire Bible after Deuteronomy, and its component commandments are treated just like all the rest. E.g., “Knowest thou the commandments?... Defraud not, honor they father and mother” (Mark 10:19) “... the epistles of Christ... not with ink... not in tables of stone...” (2 Cor 3:3)

Incidentally, it’s amazing how easy it is not to notice that when Paul speaks of the schoolmaster, he uses the past tense, and he is speaking of the experience of the Jews before Christ, not Christians after Christ. Roughly paraphrased, “You foolish Gentile, the law was our babysitter before the promised seed came. Now that we have been freed, you want to become its slaves? Well, I hope the hand holding the circumcision knife slips” (Gal. 3:24; 4:3; 5:12).

Superb articles

Just finished reading cover to cover the latest *Proclamation!* and Dale Ratzlaff’s featured article along with Dr. Verle Streifling’s article were superb. May our Lord continue to bless you in Life Assurance Ministries in proclaiming the good news of the New Covenant Gospel of grace in Christ.

Critical and less Godly

I have read several of your *Proclamation!* publications. It is so sad to see over and over that the only thing your organization has going is to slam the SDA church. Why don’t you just preach the word that you think you have totally right? You don’t need to tear someone else apart to proclaim the word of the Lord.

Every organization has something that they don’t agree about with another organization. The Lord is going to use many means to save people, even Baptists, Catholics, LDS, etc. Tearing another organization apart does not help you get closer to the Lord or heaven. It only makes you critical and less Godly.

Why don’t you just grow up spiritually and stop your vendetta against another group. Some of them will be saved too, you know. If you don’t believe that, then you are not even Christian.

Remove

Please take our name off your mailing list! Your magazine is disgusting!

Conditional forgiveness

I was reading your investigative judgment article in your March/April issue. I think you leave out some important factors. For instance: all the sins that were forgiven before Christ’s earthly ministry had to be conditional. The price had not been paid, and at that time there was no absolute assurance that the price would be paid. If anyone says that it was impossible for Christ to sink, that would make Satan tell the truth and God the liar. Satan’s stance was that God’s law was impossible, so he had the right to be king of this earth. Of course, Christ did live the sinless life necessary to be the antitype of the blameless lamb over which the sinner confessed his sins before the lamb was slain....

I think it is sad that you go to so much trouble to try to get Adventists to skip important truths in the Bible. In Ezekiel, it is also made plain that sins remain on record as it talks about what will happen to those who go back to the sins they once abandoned, etc., so a person will do well to say, “I’m in the process of being saved,” instead of the positive, “I’m saved.”

Editor’s note:

Jesus is the “Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). There was never any doubt that the price for sin would be paid. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

Thanks for your ministry

I’m a third generation SDA, and it was difficult to leave the church (i.e. friends and family), but since I’ve left I found myself to be in Jesus’ grace and dwelling in the riches of His love. Your magazine has helped me along the way! God bless you! Fight the good fight.

Please take my name off

I don’t respect anyone who just has a thing to change Adventists. Why don’t you go out and have evangelism to get people to love Jesus—you don’t believe in the term “Go ye into all the world.”

To Life Assurance Ministries

Thank you for your ministry!

Thank you for publishing *Proclamation!*

It offers such great scriptural support for the grace message/teaching. My wife and I want to express to you our deep appreciation for what you have done for all of us former Adventists to regroup and understand the true Gospel. What a pleasure it is to receive your bi-monthly *Proclamation!* magazine. We know that many Adventists have learned so much from it, although many repudiate it. We thank you for being persistent and consistent in teaching the truth of the Bible, whatever the rebuke you may receive. Keep up the great work!

Turmoil laid to rest

I wish to subscribe to *Proclamation!* magazine. My parents were SDA missionaries in Thailand for 10 years, so from the time I was young, I was saddled with the responsibility of showing the "natives" how to behave like Christians. To this day, I have NO clues on HOW to be a Christian. I just turn it over to God, and honor Him for showing me the way.

I belong to a conservative charismatic church now, and every Sunday, I am blessed by the Spirit of the Lord. Our pastor follows Biblical guidelines for spiritual gifts, but I have to tell you that due to my upbringing as an SDA, I was paranoid about any gifts that were manifested.

Material given to me by my sister this recent weekend has helped me lay to rest much of the turmoil I have experienced since beginning to attend a non-SDA church that practices the gifts of the Spirit. I will make the most of the material I am given, and do my best to spread the Word.

Thank you again. God's blessings on you and your ministry.

Counsel to LAM

I have prayerfully and painstakingly studied the points emphasized in *Proclamation!* By God's grace I have been a Berean, and my ministry has been strengthened by this process. How? Now more than ever, by God's grace, I am inspired to continue proclaiming the unique, distinctive, Biblically sound three angels' messages to all the world. The fruit of the Spirit bears witness to the transforming power of the

love of God in the presentations of Bible truth. May I give some counsel to LAM and the staff of *Proclamation!*? Continue to dig deeply and prayerfully into His Word; seek wisdom from the Lord only, and please don't ignore the fact that there are many Seventh-day Adventists who soar with the eagles because they know exactly why they believe. Also, by God's grace, please let go of the bitterness. Without exception, every issue of *Proclamation!* has a healthy serving. Thank you for sending me the complimentary copies of *Proclamation!* I can no longer make time to read them, so please remove my name from your mailing list. Thank you.

God is sovereign

I want to let you know how much I enjoy your magazine. I read it right away when it comes in the mail. I have learned so much from the insightful articles and personal stories. I would like to share a personal revelation I had. The other day my son came home and said he wanted to dye red streaks into his hair. Of course I objected to this silly idea, but he, being 19 years old, wanted a good reason why he couldn't dye his hair. I told him that his father and I would be very upset if he did it and it just wouldn't look good. He wasn't satisfied with this and wanted a better explanation. I got very upset and told him I didn't want to talk about it any more.

After a few minutes of silence, I called him up to his room to discuss it in private. I didn't know what I was going to say, but when I opened my mouth, the most amazing thing happened. I gave a perfect explanation for why he couldn't dye his hair. I told him that the reason he couldn't dye his hair was because his father and I didn't want him to and that was the only explanation he was going to get and that I didn't owe him any more of a reason than that. I reminded him of all the blessings and privileges he has and asked him if he felt he was deprived of anything. He humbly said "No." Then I said, "Son, everything you have and have ever had has been given to you by your father and me. We don't owe you anything else. But what you owe us is to love and respect us and to abide by our wishes as long as you remain under our roof. Is dying your hair so important to you that you would be willing to upset your parents over it?" He again, humbly said, "No." That was the end of it.

Earlier that day I had read an article from the most recent publication of *Proclamation!* magazine. As an Adventist, I have been led to believe that it is up to us saints to become perfect in character so that God's name can be vindicated. I remember at times thinking, if Jesus has to wait for a group of people to become so perfect that they can stand in God's presence without a mediator, Jesus will never come! Yet the signs are always there that the end of the world is near! I could never reason in my mind that God needed us to vindicate His name.

After my conversation with my son, I realized what I had said to him was what God says to us. I AM SOVEREIGN. I HAVE GIVEN YOU EVERYTHING. I DON'T OWE YOU AN EXPLANATION FOR EVERYTHING I DO. BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD. Wow! What a revelation! My answer to my son was an answer for me too. I cried tears of joy when I realized what I had just learned. This might sound silly to the average Christian, but as a former Adventist, I'm sure you know where I'm coming from.

Being an Adventist is tough. Learning how to let go and accept the fact that I have little or no control over His plans is something I am gradually learning. One of these days I will make the break from Adventism.

Thank you for your ministry.

God is awesome

I was an Adventist for 25 years and have just received my confirmation of membership withdrawal this month in time for my 53rd birthday. It was a great birthday present! I love the Adventist people. My friend and I shared as much former Adventist info with those left behind as we could, trusting that God would do something. We continue to pray for these people... We have been blessed very much since leaving the Adventist church... Thank God for you people! God is Awesome!

Letters may be edited for clarity or space.

Mail letters and donations to:

Life Assurance Ministries
P.O. Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

Pastor Greg Taylor visits former Adventists CONTINUED FROM FRONT

This summer, Greg Taylor, representing the ministry he founded, One Flock Ministries, again traveled to Uganda at the request of the pastors there, and we share here his email dated June 29, 2005. We are rejoicing that the work we feared had collapsed has indeed born fruit and is thriving.

**Dear Family and Praying Friends,
Mbala Musizza My Yeso Kristo (I greet you all in Jesus' Name)**

God has been so powerful in this entire ministry trip. We have connected with pastors of major church ministries in the area that have a heart to help former SDAs get connected into ministry. We met with the leadership of the Full Gospel churches in Uganda. They have an inter-denominational college for training ministers. They are currently working with one of the former SDA pastors and are equipping him to plant a church in a region where there are few churches. We also met with

Calvary Chapel. I will share more about that connection later. Very exciting! We also met with the leader of the Emmaus group that is currently helping three of the churches that developed out of our last ministry time in Uganda. The Emmaus

group is similar to Baptists in the states. The Anglicans are training another former SDA pastor. They are truly a Bible believing evangelical group in Uganda, unlike their Episcopal Church relatives in the USA. God has truly been at work here. We now have seen that some seven churches have been born out of the one series of meetings we led here two and a half years ago. Here in Uganda, the SDA system is highly legalistic. Most of these dear people are just coming to the assurance of salvation after leaving the SDA church. They cannot contain their joy.

Yesterday we went to a village in West Central Uganda and served some ministers there. They were not from a Seventh-day Adventist background but had connected with me through the internet and had invited me to come share with them. Such a powerful move of God took place.

I met a man named Peter Odoi through Jeannie Pearce, a good friend and former Adventist. He came along and assisted me in ministry there. He has a heart for discipleship and for prayer and fasting; he is a powerful man of God. He is also a writer, and he and I will be discussing this coming Friday morning his translating my book *[Discovering the New Covenant]* into the Luganda language. He suggests condensing it so the average Ugandan will read it; he believes it will make a powerful impact on the community.

We had a great day yesterday. Many Africans, especially in the interior, have to deal with legalism because it comes from their association with the animism they've come out of. Their gods could easily be offended, so they have to be constantly reminded of God's grace.

This morning I had breakfast with Brian Kelly and Joshua Carson. They pastor the Calvary Chapel in town. They have been growing quickly. God is truly blessing their ministry. I discussed with them the issues transitioning Adventist pastors face and asked them about these ministers being able to attend their college for remedial training and course work. They were very excited about the idea. They were also interested in speaking to some of the pastors, so we met after the breakfast with four former SDA pastors. They had a great meeting. They would like some of the pastors to start volunteering in their church and to take some classes as they direct. Then they will look at ways, as God leads, to help them get started in churches of their own should there be good connections. Exciting!

There are 3,000,000 people in Uganda that list themselves as Adventists in the census. While only 150,000 are on the Adventist books, the SDA influence via their meetings has made strong inroads here. Many people don't attend anywhere because they have been "Adventist-ized," so they don't feel free to connect with other churches. This possibility for former Adventist pastors to train with Calvary Chapel and to find placement in churches is a huge opportunity.

The Calvary guys thought it might be good to have me and perhaps another former Adventist come and teach an intensive on Adventism for their college between semesters. They would also like more books. We supplied them with some and will send more. In addition, they also need textbooks in general that we might be able to help them acquire via donations. I will be talking to Mark Martin when I get back. It would be great if he could come and speak at their church here and also help with the class on Adventism.

I am so encouraged. I see such a heart among the churches to help Adventists get free and such a hunger in the Adventists to truly start evangelical, Spirit-filled churches. This has been a very fruitful trip.

I am so happy to see all the opportunities for transitioning ministers developing. I know God has opened many doors. I just found out about a seventh church that was started through our ministry two years ago. It is about 60 strong! I trust God is now going to bring support along to help pastors get training they need. This training will be through the covering institutions themselves and will not take our administration. They will screen their candidates, provide instruction and place them. Since God has opened the door, I trust He will bring the funding.

They now realize that transfer-
ence was not correct theology,
and it has set them up for the
Adventist arguments.



TOP LEFT:
Calvary Chapel ministers Brian Kelly and Joshua Carson meet with former SDA ministers.



TOP RIGHT:
Pastor Greg Taylor greets a young Ugandan woman and her child at a former SDA church near Mukono.

RIGHT:
A new Church Plant near Kajansi, Uganda.



This afternoon we are headed to Mokono University, an Anglican University, to talk to the students about the Adventist system and to teach them about the New Covenant. They have been teaching transference theology (Sabbath transferred to Sunday) in the past. They now realize that transference was not correct theology, and it has set them up for the Adventist arguments. God is truly working in the Anglican denomination here. They are Biblical, gospel-oriented, and hungry to learn the word.

One thing that is most exciting to me is the large base of opportunity God has opened for us in the USA and other developed countries to help support what God is doing in Uganda and other places. With solid connections in place with other church systems and colleges, we have opportunities to support

people leaving the SDA system by giving to the institutions that will be training and releasing them. In this way, we can help with educational and mentorship expenses for ministers and teachers, while not getting involved in personal financial sponsorship where accountability can become an issue. I also see many more opportunities opening up especially on the African continent. I have been receiving emails from Kenyans, Malawians, Rwandans, and others that are interested in similar opportunities in their countries.

Better go for now. Love to you all! Thanks again for your prayers!
In Christ, Greg Taylor

You may contact Greg by email: gregt@oneflockministries.org!

From striving to surrender TAMI CHESTER

I grew up in a staunchly legalistic Adventist family where God's mercy, love and grace were never a part of my theological thought structure. Our family would gather most evenings for family devotions which usually consisted of a passage from one of Ellen G. White's books. As I grew older, my father would have me read books such as *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Desire of Ages*, and many others and then write book reports on them. Needless to say, the picture of God that became ingrained in my heart, mind, and spirit was one of an angry, judgmental, distant Being who loved to execute revenge on anyone who crossed Him, a God whom I could never fully please nor in whose presence I would be able to stand unless I somehow mysteriously reached a state of perfection. I grew up terrified by the thought of Jesus' coming, the "end times", and the persecution I would undergo as an Adventist.

At the age of 12, I was baptized into the Adventist church. The morning of my baptism, I still remember thinking very clearly to myself that from that moment on I would finally be able to live a perfect life that was pleasing to God so that He would love and accept me.

Unfortunately, by 3:00 that afternoon I

had a fight with my sister! I cried as I realized I had "blown it" again and was far from perfect.

During the next several years I became increasingly despairing. By the time I was 13, I had given up in my heart. I chucked Adventism and anything else that had to do with God or religion. I continued to go through the motions, but my heart was hard and far away. In my later teenage years I began to rebel openly against God and all I had been taught. I figured since

The morning of my baptism, I still remember thinking very clearly to myself that from that moment on I would finally be able to live a perfect life that was pleasing to God so that He would love and accept me.

God would never accept me the way I was, I wanted nothing to do with Him, either. One day I shook my fist in his face and screamed, "Go ahead, burn me up. I'd rather go to hell than spend eternity with you and a bunch of Adventists!" (I had no real fear of hell, believing that I would burn up in an instant, anyway!). As an adult I left the Adventist church and for many years lived a life that was far away from God. It never occurred to me that I was defiant, rebellious, bitter, or angry towards God. I just knew I didn't care at all about having anything to do with Him.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Tami Chester and her husband Ross live in Redlands, California, and have three children. They worship and serve God together as a family at Pathway Church. Tami is involved in discipling children and reaching out to unsaved children in the local community, as she believes bringing the good news of the gospel to children is the greatest commission in the world!



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