

Seventh-day Adventist pastor resigns as he can no longer preach “another gospel” [Galatians 1:6-9]

In my September 1999 ‘News From The Front’ that can be viewed on <http://www.takeheed.info/news-from-the-front-sept-1999/> I included an article called ‘Seventh-day Adventism: Christian or Cult’? Towards the end of that article I wrote –

‘By their teachings on this subject Seventh-day Adventists have a wrong view of the work of Christ at Calvary and in consequence they have a wrong view on salvation... That is the teaching of a CULT, it is NOT CHRISTIAN and it lays the foundation for the grace + works ‘gospel’ of Seventh-day Adventism’.

For years, prior to and also subsequent to my own article the debate has gone on in professing Christian circles as to whether or not Seventh-day Adventism should be regarded as being a Cult or as a genuine branch of Christianity. I have to say that I have not wavered from the conclusion I published in my article back in 1999 that it falls into the ‘cult’ category.

This conviction on my part has been reinforced in recent weeks with the publication of a letter of resignation from someone who served as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in America. I plan now to publish here his letter of resignation that can be viewed [+ interesting feedback/comments] ON <http://bens10.wordpress.com/2010/04/05/my-resignation-letter/>

March 15, 2010

Dear Elder Caviness,

It is with careful consideration that I submit my letter of resignation as Interim Pastor/Associate Pastor in the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, effective March 31, 2010.

Though I’ve witnessed and experienced my share of challenges with leadership, I assure you that this decision is not the result of any disagreement or ill treatment from the membership or the leadership. **My reason for resigning is simply this: God is calling me to preach and teach the unadulterated Gospel found solely in Scripture rather than the Gospel, plus Ellen G. White and the SDA doctrines (in effect, what Galatians 1 calls “another gospel”).**

I can no longer agree to preach or teach the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or, through my silence, imply that I agree with them. But allow me to be plain and specific. Because I have been a student of the Word and been sensitive to the Lord’s leading and teaching, I no longer believe that Scripture supports:

- **The Mission of the Church (3 Angels' Messages)**
- **The SDA Church is the remnant church (Fundamental Belief #13)**
- **Investigative Judgment/Pre-Advent Judgment (Fundamental Belief #24)**
- **Ellen G. White is a messenger of God (Fundamental Belief #18)**
- **Sabbath is the seal of God**
- **The Great Controversy worldview (Fundamental Belief #8)**

Although not exhaustive, the above list represents ample reasons for me to tender my resignation. I will minister with integrity. I trust that my work performance and Christian leadership has been indicative of the work that the Holy Spirit has birthed in my life. I hope you will not ask me to defend my decision to follow Jesus Christ (and Him alone) and trust Him completely to be the Way, the Truth and the Life.

I have appreciated my time spent ministering in this conference and thank you for the trust you've placed in my leadership these last three years. You can count on my full cooperation to ensure a smooth transition.

For His Glory,
Pastor Benjamin T. McPhaul

It is evident from the gracious yet factual content of this letter that Pastor Benjamin has truly been enlightened by the Holy Spirit to discern and to recognise the inherent errors of 'the gospel' proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventism. In particular he listed a number of SDA teachings that in his own words '**I no longer believe that Scripture supports**' and he made reference to a number of '**Fundamental Beliefs**' spelt out by Seventh-day Adventism on their own web site '**Fundamental Beliefs**' located on <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

Pastor Benjamin mentioned 4 of those '**Fundamental Beliefs**' that he recognised as running contrary to what Scripture teaches and they were as follows – [Cecil – I have added a few comments of my own in red]

Fundamental Belief No. 13 - Remnant and Its Mission:

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness.

The work of those called by God [His Church] has ALWAYS been to preach "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24) and by their lives to witness to the transforming power of that Gospel. Such true believers are found in a variety of churches/denominations and they are not located solely in any one exclusive grouping.

A A Hoekema in his book **'The Four Major Cults'** writes this about Seventh-day Adventism on page 131 **'their application of the concept "remnant church" to themselves is neither exegetically nor doctrinally defensible'** (Exegetically Mr Hoekema then explains that the word translated 'remnant of' in Revelation 12:17 would be more accurately translated 'rest of' and then doctrinally he writes **"the concept of the remnant church is also indefensible. The Scriptures speak about the one body of Christ with its many members and specifically warns against the sin of exalting oneself above other members of the body of Christ"**). In heaven, our Saviour is not involved in a work of 'judgment' but of 'intercession' for His redeemed people (Hebrews 7:24-26 & 1st John 2:1).

Fundamental Belief No. 24 - Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary:

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent.

This supposed work of 'investigative judgment' that it is claimed began in heaven in 1844 is totally without scriptural foundation and ends up setting out quite clearly the teaching that salvation is dependent upon [not evidenced by] people 'keeping commandments' and 'remaining loyal'. It also infers that the 'disposition of all sin' as pictured by the ritual on the Day of Atonement [Propitiation and Expiation as explained in my 1999 article] was not fully accomplished by Christ on The Cross – the Biblical antidote to such error is Christ's cry of triumph on the cross "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Fundamental Belief No: 18 - The Gift of Prophecy:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.

In the book-version of these 'Fundamental Beliefs' that I have in my possession much more extravagant claims are made concerning Ellen G White for there we read (p224) **"The gift of prophecy was active in the ministry [a woman minister!] of Ellen G White... She has given INSPIRED instruction for God's people living during the time of the end... Ellen White never assumed the title of prophetess but she did not object when others called her by that title... I know that many have called me a prophet but I have made no claim to this title... my work includes much more than the word 'prophet' signifies** [Christ was Prophet, Priest and King – what role/work other than that of a 'prophet' did Ellen White claim to be involved in?] **... If others call me by that name I have no controversy with them".** Ellen White didn't object to being called a 'prophet' and claimed her work went beyond that of a mere 'prophet'.

In an article located on <http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Prophet/tabid/55/Default.aspx> you can read details of some of the 'prophecies' that Ellen White supposedly received in some of her claimed 'visions' – they include –

1. Mrs White will be alive when Jesus returns
2. England will attack the United States (1862)
3. The (American) Civil War is a sign Jesus is about to return
4. In 1850's Mrs White said Jesus will return "in a few months"
5. Adventists living in 1856 will be alive when Jesus returns
6. Mrs White saw Enoch on Jupiter or Saturn

On the basis of these few examples alone Ellen White fails the test of Deuteronomy 18:22 and is clearly a 'false prophet' that should be ignored and warned against.

Fundamental Belief No. 8 - Great Controversy:

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation.

In this statement, there is a lack of clarity concerning the effects of 'original sin' – it was much more devastating than simply being **“the distortion of the image of God in humanity”** – it resulted in immediate 'spiritual death' (Genesis 2:16-17 7 Ephesians 2:1, 4-5). This brief statement of the **'Great Controversy'** falls far short of what is written in the book-version of these 'Fundamental Beliefs' that I have in my possession and also it does not come anywhere near to the size of the actual book called **'The Great Controversy'** written by Ellen White and that runs to 694 pages. Contained in that book are these words (pp 422 & 673) penned by Ellen White **“the scapegoat (as involved in the Day of Atonement described in Leviticus 16:8, 10, 20-22) typified SATAN, the author of sin, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will FINALLY be placed... When Christ... removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary... He will place them upon SATAN who... must bear the final penalty. The scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited... So SATAN will be forever banished from the presence of God and His people and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners... The sins of the righteous having been transferred to SATAN, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he caused God's people to commit”**. The reality is that SATAN plays no role in the salvation from and the blotting out of the sins of God's people – the work of both the sacrificial goat and also the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement pictured the one all sufficient sacrifice by Christ at Calvary to save and justify His people. Notice also the reference to the unscriptural teaching of 'annihilation' in the words **'blotted from existence'**. By way of conclusion on this particular point the following interesting comment on 'The Great Controversy' was posted to the web site containing the resignation letter –

1. I rejoice in Pastor McPhaul's decision to follow the Holy Spirit. During the first Gulf War, while stationed in the Middle East, I started taking distance education classes from Columbia Union College. During my first class I discovered that the Great Controversy strayed mightily from actual biblical teaching. I felt so betrayed and brainwashed by the teachings of the SDA church that I could not set foot in another church for 8 years. Eventually, I began to listen to the Holy Spirit and found my way to a wonderful church and with urging from the Holy Spirit and my pastor I went to the seminary. I now pastor a small church in Maine and am blessed every day. The ironic thing to all this is that a splinter group from the local SDA church rents our church on Saturdays. I love God's sense of humor. By *Bill Wade* April 30, 2010 at 7:37 pm

Whilst it is very possible that there are other genuinely 'born again' believers within the ranks of Seventh-day Adventism, there is a 'track-record' of the Holy Spirit bringing such people away from the SDA church. Such was the case with former Roman Catholic priest Bart Brewer, a dear friend and brother in Christ who went to be with the Lord in 2005 (a tribute to Bart can be viewed on <http://www.takeheed.info/tribute-to-bart-brewer/>)

After leaving the Roman Catholic priesthood Bart trained and became an SDA pastor but in chapter 11 of his book [pp 95-100] **'Pilgrimage from Rome'** he wrote the following –

'My first sermon emphasized the need for every pastor to preach the good news of salvation and growth in the Lord...Holy Scripture was my anchor, and His salvation was my message... the call came for my ordination to take place in the Vallejo Drive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Glendale... I admired the Adventists greatly... As time passed, there was only one thing that dampened our joy and caused some unrest in my heart. That was the heavy reliance of many Adventists on the writings and teachings of Mrs Ellen G White... I wanted to be sure that our little flock would look only to the Scriptures as the final authority for their faith... at the seminar (an annual SDA "Testimony Countdown" conference) I learned that leading Adventist elders regard them (Mrs White's writings) as equal in authority to the writings of the prophets... She (Mrs White) came to regard herself as a sovereign authority on everything to which she put her mind... I knew that her teachings had become central doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church but I could not accept them as being equal with Scripture... I was summoned to a meeting one day and certain complaints were brought to my attention... Even my critics admitted that I was faithful to the Bible. I saw that as long as I questioned Mrs White's predictions and interpretations I was headed for repeated confrontations with the church's leaders... I would not submit to another pope or modern prophetess... Christianity is a personal walk with Jesus as Lord and Saviour, not a keeping of the laws as prescribed by Mrs White and the church hierarchy... My last sermon in the Adventist church came from Hebrews 1:3 "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high". These words had brought me solace and comfort as I prepared my last message there.

Those inspired words in Hebrews 1:3 concerning the sufficiency and finality of Christ's saving work on the cross – **"when had had by himself purged our sins"** – drive the final nail in the coffin of all so-called Christian 'gospels' that would seek to mingle a sinner's works with the all sufficient, finished work of Christ at Calvary and that is precisely what both Roman Catholicism and Seventh-day Adventism seek to do and Bart Brewer was well enabled by the Holy Spirit to discern such false 'gospels'. Roman Catholics and Seventh-day Adventists would do well to **"Take Heed"** to these wise words of Bart Brewer.

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 3rd May 2010