

The Highway of Holiness

A Baptismal Guidebook



Volume 2
(Student Version)

David Aguilar

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Introduction – The Need for Christian Education

Character – this is the sole factor that determines one’s destiny. While knowledge and wisdom are useful talents, the Christian acknowledges that they are a gift from Heaven and, by themselves, not enough to make one a spiritual success. While pure doctrines and proper teachings are divine aids to developing the individual soul, they are not ends in themselves, but means to the everlasting result. The Scriptures teach us, “Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)

Good works, likewise, may polish and refine an individual already committed to truth, but “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9) Yahshua the Messiah, the Son of the Almighty, revealed that a man may be “known” by his works, (Matthew 7:20) but it is not the works that have made the man what he is.

Character is the last link in the chain between Earth and Heaven over which mankind has a measure of control due to free will. The Scriptures tell us that we must take control of our thoughts, (2Cor 10:5) that we must take command of our actions, (1Cor 9:27) and that we are free (in Christ) to have power over our own habits: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.” (1Pet 3:10, 11) This is how we define and develop character.



Figure 0.1 – The Chain of Character

We note that in the Judgment works are mentioned, but works are not the deciding factor. Christ declares, “Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’” (Mat 7:22, 23) He does not say, “Depart from me *because* you worked iniquity,” but rather iniquity (committing sinful acts) is the defining characteristic of those who have not achieved the destiny of the saints.

There is a need for education among Adventists regarding the proper relationship between faith and works. Not a single individual should be

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baptized into the Body of the Messiah until he or she is able to understand and, to a great degree, teach others, that we are saved by grace through faith, (Eph 2:8) but that we then become “[Yahweh’s] workmanship, created in Christ Yahshua unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (verse 10)

Some have said, “Why is there a need for study of the Scriptures before baptism? Why is there a need for such education in all things Christian, when we find in the Bible examples of men and women being baptized quickly, often knowing little of doctrine or practice?”

This is a legitimate question, and deserves a thorough answer. We may cite the example of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was baptized after a relatively short meeting with Philip the deacon. (Acts 8:26-38) We may consider the case of the Gentile Cornelius, who called for an audience with Peter the apostle, and received baptism after hearing but one sermon. (Acts 10) And then there were those believers from among the Jews, three thousand in number, who were convicted that their nation had committed apostasy in crucifying Yahshua, and were baptized that very day. (Acts 2:14-41)

In the days of the early Church, the followers of Christ were one in spirit and visible unity, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42) There were no schisms; there were no denominational differences. What was taught was the Gospel of Yahshua in its purity, with no taint of such later errors as salvation in sin, salvation by works, Sunday sacredness, consciousness in death, Trinitarianism, Augustinian predestination, and so on. If one should stand up in that day and declare, “I am a Christian,” they would receive one of two responses. Either the hearers would ask, “What does that mean?” and patiently wait to be educated, or they would have heard of the sect and understood what it *meant*, even if imperfectly.

It was not necessary to define what being a “Christian” meant, beyond explaining the details of which outsiders may have been ignorant. There were no doctrine-based prejudices, unless one counts the pagan and Gnostic opponents of the Cross. If two Christians met they did not need to subject one another to the “Test of Creeds” to see if they were safe to be entrusted with the right hand of fellowship (Gal 2:9) or the holy kiss. (Rom 16:16)

Sadly, such a thing was not to last. Men of authority in the Body betrayed their trust, and doctrinal falsehoods began to seep in, subtly at first, and then more openly. Paul lamented to the elders of Ephesus, even before his work was finished, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29, 30) He warned the Thessalonians, “Let no man deceive you by any means, for that Day [of Yahshua’s return (*cf.*, verses 1 & 2)] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be

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revealed, the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity *doth already work*; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” (2Th 2:3-7)

Some specific errors may be cited: “But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker, of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus who, concerning the truth, have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2Tim 2:16-18)

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Yahshua the Messiah is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1John 4:3)

Today there are more denominations than a man may number, yet they are not united, as a “great multitude” should be. (Rev 7:9) Among them are those who deny the divinity of Christ, and there are those who reject the very freedom that He died to give us. There are those who believe the Law of God has been abolished, and there are those who believe in a Creator who will punish His little children forever in fiery torment for being deceived by men and foul spirits more crafty and experienced than they. But more important than all this... there are those within the kingdom of “Christendom” who have not developed the character of Christ.

If the doctrine they have received has not led them to develop the right character, they may know they have been misled. This is why it is important for Christians to be educated. In the days of Acts, a “Christian” could be trusted to speak the truth in love, and encourage new believers Heavenward. Yet even then, the apostles had much work to do to keep the Body in its right course. Paul, James, John, Jude, and Peter wrote epistles warning the Church against faulty beliefs, and even against particular individuals, so that their work would survive the flames of tribulation and testing. (1Cor 3:13, 14) The Gospel writers recorded and presented the life of Yahshua in order to maintain a record of the most perfect example for humanity.

We cannot be content to say, for example, “What was good enough for Cornelius is good enough for me; take me to water.” Today the members of our own spiritual House have become our enemies, (Micah 7:6) and in these very last days even *Seventh-day Adventists*, those commandment-keeping, Investigative-judgment-believing, health-reforming champions of the Scriptures have fallen prey to the wiles of the Deceiver. Even the spiritual

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sons of the reformers, who have received so bright a light, and so manifest an abundance of blessings, have come short – as a collective people – of that great plan that Yahshua has laid out for His Church.

More details on that particular follow during the course of this book, but the point should be abundantly clear: If we are to know whether or not we are being led in the right direction, our trust must be in the Almighty and His Word, (Psa 18:30) and we must be equipped by those whom Yahweh has placed in the Body to stand against the world, the devils, and the false brethren who would betray us with a kiss. “And He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph 4:11-13)

This is the work of the Church in its entirety: to win souls and to facilitate the perfection of those who are seeking a better Country on the Highway of Holiness. (Isa 35:8)

Some notes follow for the use of this document:

1) This is a Guidebook. It is not a formal statement of CSDA beliefs, nor is it a defense of any particular doctrine or set of doctrines; as such, it may not contain an exhaustive examination of every belief that is held. It is left to the evangelists of the Church to instruct interested parties in the details and proofs drawn from the Scriptures that lend their weight of evidence to our conclusions. It is left to the evangelists to explain our position on some of the details of Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White, and how we utilize her writings. What this book presents is a collection of beliefs that we generally hold to be necessary for baptismal candidates to understand before they are admitted to membership, so that they may properly represent the character and work of the Creator. It provides some verses in support of the positions presented, but in the interest of both space and time does not dwell overly long on any but the most vital. This work is intended for use in conjunction with Bible study and discussion with knowledgeable individuals, and should not be used, on its own, as a Bible commentary.

2) All Bible quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted, with the exception of the Divine names generally being restored to their original pronunciation. Some examples:

a) “God” becomes “Almighty One” or “Elohim,” and “the LORD” becomes “Yah” or “Yahweh” in the Old Testament readings. “The lord GOD” becomes “Adonai Yahweh” as it appears in the Hebrew manuscripts, and “The LORD God,” similarly, becomes, “Yahweh Elohim.”

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b) When quoting New Testament verses, “Jesus” becomes “Yahshua”, “God” may become “Yah,” and “Lord” becomes either “Yah” or “Yahshua” depending on the Subject of the passage.

c) Pronouns referring to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (“He,” “Him,” “His,” “It,” etc.) are all capitalized in Bible verses. So are certain important terms such as Book of Life, Sanctuary and Woman, when the latter is used in reference to the Church.

3) The word *Church* is sometimes capitalized and sometimes spelled with a small “c.” This is not an inconsistency; where the word “church” is used, it refers to one of the many ecclesiastical organizations claiming that title. When the form “Church” is employed, it is in reference to the spiritual Body of Christ, the Body of believers that is currently (or from the perspective of the timeframe used) being faithful to the Head, which is Yahshua.

4) Brief comments on Bible verses or quotes are added directly into the text in [square brackets]; longer comments and discussions of the verses are recorded outside of the “quotation” signs that enclose the referenced text.

5) Bible verses are not always quoted in full. Generally, only those portions produced by the speaker/author are recorded with the reference given in (brackets) or mentioned before the quote itself. Readers are encouraged to have their Bibles handy to see the original text, unbroken by comments and insertions, in order to get the most meaning out of both the original passages and this material. Instructors who are using this Guidebook as a resource for instructing new and potential believers are encouraged to take students through the entire passages so that the full effect of inspiration’s words may be received.



Instructor Note
This is an example of an embedded text box. The Instructor Notes indicate an instructor has more to share on this topic.

6) This is the Student Version of *The Highway of Holiness*, and as such it does not contain the instructor references. The **Instructor Note** text boxes, such as the one above, indicate that information on the topic being studied can be obtained from a member who may be helping you study. Additional types of text boxes are also used for emphases, cautions, links or suggested activities.

Yahweh bless thee, and keep thee;

Yahweh make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee;

Yahweh lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

David Aguilar.

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Chapter 5: Thy Fellow Pilgrims

Topics: Church Government and Structure, Unity in Diversity, Gospel Order, The Authority of Members, The Family Unit

5.1 – Church Government and Structure

5.1.1 – Organization of The Body

From a strictly sociological viewpoint, one of the advantages that Christianity has had over Judaism is its evangelistic focus. While it is true that in the New Testament times there was a system of proselytizing performed by the Hebrews, there was never the same sense of immediacy or fervor to make converts as in historical Christianity. The parable that Yahshua provided regarding the wedding feast fittingly points out the difference in focus:

“A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, ‘Come; for all things are now ready.’ And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

“The first said unto him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.’

“And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.’

“And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’

“So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.’

“And the servant said, ‘Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.’

“And the lord said unto the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.’” (Luke 14:16b-23)

When the initial invitation went forth, the Jewish Church consisted of those who were invited. The Messiah was sent first to the “lost sheep of Israel,” (Mat 15:24) but these were neither helping to give the invitation, nor coming in themselves. Further, with the prevailing attitude of the “chosen people” toward the Gentiles, it was a difficult step for even the sympathetic

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non-Hebrews, such as Cornelius the Centurion, to actually “become Jewish,” or be accepted by the nation.

One of the first lessons the early Church received after the departure of Yahshua was the equal status of all men under God, regardless of ethnic or nationalistic considerations. There was a new kind of division made in mankind: those who were in Christ, and those who were not. Yet even this division was not a fleshly barrier, as the national identity of the Hebrews has become, (Eph 2:15) but rather a protective fence from which the invitation was ever going forth to draw others into the Covenant.

While the concept of a “chosen people” remained in Christianity, the followers of Yahshua were actively encouraged to associate with non-believers for the purpose of telling them about Yahshua. (Mat 28:19) This was in stark contrast with the Jewish restrictions regarding non-Jews, including not being able to eat at the same table, or even visiting them in their houses. (Gal 2:12, Acts 10:28)

In the Hebrew system there was a set structure of religious authority. The priests were a subset of the Levites, who were a subset of the Tribes. Of the priests there were specific divisions, with each group being responsible for particular tasks relating to the sanctuary. (Num 3:23-37)

If, then, there was such an organized structure pertaining to the religious ceremonies of the relatively homogenous Hebrew nation, how much more should we expect an ordered system to be set in place for overseeing the New Testament Church? Diversity and Order are not opposing concepts, any more than the blessing of individuality is at odds with being “in one spirit” with the saints. (Phil 1:27)

We find a number of passages describing the details of this Structure, as dictated by the Holy Spirit and the needs of the young movement:

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” (1Cor 12:27, 28)

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, ‘When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men’ (now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things). And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph 4:7-12)

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“Then the twelve [apostles] called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, ‘It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.’ And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” (Acts 6:2-6)



Figure 5.1 – The Church Structure

Figure 5.1 shows a basic list of Church officials as described by the consolidated passages of Scripture. In 1Cor 12, “teachers” are listed as third under apostles and prophets, while Ephesians 4 breaks this division down further. Bearing in mind that the work of these individuals often overlaps, (*e.g.*, all are to be “teachers”) and that spiritual gifts may be shared among officers and laymen alike, we may come up with a general idea of the Church hierarchy.

Apostles and evangelists tend to be mobile. Their work is to go from place to place, sharing the Gospel with individuals and gathering congregations to perpetuate the work of Christ in particular areas. Pastors, elders and deacons are generally tied to specific locations, as indicated by such passages as Titus 1:5, in which Titus, an evangelist, is reminded of his responsibility to “ordain elders in every city.” Prophets are more versatile; they may be members of various congregations, (1Cor 14:29-33, Acts 13:1) or found among the travelers, bearing messages for others as they go. (Acts 11:27; 15:32, 33)

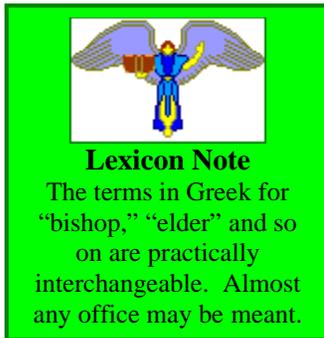
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5.1.2 – The Qualifications For Church Officers

The qualifications are given for those who are to hold an office in the Church, the requirements indicating the level of responsibility involved:

“This is a true saying: If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?). Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Yahshua.” (1Tim 3:1-13)



“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee, if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:5-9)

Not only are the individuals themselves to be sanctified by the truth, their reputations and families must likewise be blameless, lest a reproach be brought upon the work and its observers unjustly prejudiced against the Gospel. We can understand this need as we read of the purpose for the Church’s organization: “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

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Some in the first century, just as today, drew away from organized worship, but the Scriptures rebuke such a course of action in clear and direct language, saying, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching.” (Heb 10:24, 25) The context of that statement, which describes individuals who were lost because of unbelief, gives great force to the exhortation.

It is true, it is perfectly true, that we are saved as individuals, and that the Church cannot save anyone, only Christ. Yet those who use these truths as a justification to disobey the clear instructions given to us for our own sanctification are not of the Spirit of Christ who saves. Yahweh gives gifts unto men; yet they are not gifts for pleasure only, but according to our needs. The Sabbath blessing was given because of a need in man, and this was even before the fall into sin. (Gen 2:3) How much more do we not need lessons about the Spirit of rest in these evil times?

Similarly, the worship of Yahweh was always according to order, to propriety, even in the days of the Hebrew nation. How much more do we not need structure in our religious observances in these times of compromise and spiritual lethargy?

5.1.3 – The Authority of The Church

Those who despise order despise Yahweh, for He is a God of order, entirely separate from confusion, (1Cor 14:33) chaos and the self-serving concept of individualism (which is different from *individuality*). There is certainly a place for each kind of personality in the religion of Yahshua, and every individual has gifts and talents. There is also a sanctified conformity that has everyone working toward the same goals, and all accepting the same principles of life and spirituality; but although every mind is joined with Christ upon the new birth experience, (1Cor 2:16) each is to be convinced of the path he is walking, “fully persuaded in his own mind.” (Rom 14:5)

One of the two main pillars of Protestantism is resistance to the arbitrary authority of the Church to control individual consciences (the other being resistance to the civil government’s intrusion into religious liberty). The key here, however, is the word “arbitrary.” While the Church is never to actively control anyone, its structure has been set in place to guide the paths of Its adherents, and to assist in the training (rather than control) of its members’ consciences by Its teachings and practices in accord with Bible principles.

The authority of the Church is well described in the Scriptures:

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“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.” (Heb 13:17)

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” (1Pet 5:1-5)

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.” (Titus 2:15)

“Verily I say unto you, ‘whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’” (Matthew 18:18)

Clearly, there is a great degree of divine authority placed upon those in responsible positions within the Church structure. Yet in no case is this authority to eclipse individual convictions. Members are free to follow their consciences, as long as their actions do not violate the Scriptures’ teachings regarding transgression of Yahweh’s law. Commitments made one to another are to be held as sacred, according to divine teachings, (Num 30:2, Acts 5:3-5) and all common activities are to be undertaken according to the concept of **agreement**, which is a central theme of this chapter.

It is indicated in the Bible that certain individuals are to be particularly respected. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, members of a Church that he established, “I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Yahshua I have begotten you through the Gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

“Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?” (1Cor 4:14-21)

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Here we see the responsibility that pastors and evangelists feel for those whom they have helped to find the path of life. As spiritual “fathers,” to some extent, (although the concept has been taken too far in certain churches) those who are in authority are set in place to warn, to encourage, and to correct if necessary, the paths of those for whom they feel responsible. John, likewise, wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” (3John 1:4)

The human family, which is a reflection of the Godhead Itself, serves as a pattern for the ecclesiastical body. Yet just as children and wives are not to obey the head of the household to the degree that personal convictions are ignored, so likewise members of a Church must cooperate with the clergy by agreement, and not because of mere decrees. If the template is understood, and the pattern diligently followed, then there will be no place for Satan to establish a “them versus us” mentality in the minds of either the overseers or the members, and all things will be accomplished “decently and in order.” (1Cor 14:40)

5.2 – Unity in Diversity

With the increase in the sense of individualism, which amounts to the worship of individuality, or the perceived virtue of being a “loner,” the Church has an additional responsibility to make these concepts being discussed plain. Submission to the Church authority is not a surrender of individuality, any more than it is a surrender of individuality for a wife to be submissive to her husband. (Eph 5:22) If the husband of a submissive wife is truly interested in her best good, she has lost nothing by respecting the headship ordained by Heaven. Similarly, if the Church to which one submits is truly led by Yahweh, its members have lost nothing by participating wholeheartedly in Its objectives and interests.

How is it that there may be unity in diversity?
As in all things, it is best to look to the very origins of our doctrines in order to best understand them.

Yahweh, with whom the concepts of both unity and individuality began, is the very model for this principle, as we shall see again in an upcoming section. Yahshua said of the relationship between Himself and Yahweh, “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30) He later elaborates on this while speaking of His disciples in prayer, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and



Emphasis Note

Looking to the revealed qualities of Elohim is one of the surest ways of discerning the truth of Biblical doctrine.

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that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:20-23)

The Father and Son are One in that they share the same glory, which has the following connotations from the Greek word *doxa*: opinion, judgment, view, splendor, brightness, majesty, personal excellency, exalted state, and so on. We note that there is a spiritual and intellectual harmony shared by Those of Elohim, yet it does not obliterate the difference between the two. Yahshua is revealed at times to be dealing with the factors influencing His humanity, which factors the Father does not *directly* experience. To be sure, the Father experienced all things through the Son, as it is written, (2Cor 5:18, 19) but it was the Son’s chosen role to rely upon the majesty and power of the Father to overcome the temptations to which He was subjected. (John 5:30, Luke 4:1-4) It was in this sense that the Father is “greater” than the Son (John 14:28) – not in glory or authority, for Yahshua Himself stated that they had the same glory, and the glory that He received from the Father was not a mere gift or declaration, but truly a glory that He and the Father had previously shared. (John 17:5)

In John 17, Yahshua was not praying that His disciples all enter into a unity that would make them indistinguishable from each other. No indeed, He would often speak of the qualities that distinguished them, and the different roles they were to play in the ministry, (John 1:47; Mark 3:16, 17; Mat 20:23; John 21:22) but at the same time He was extremely concerned that there should be no disputes among them that would interfere with the harmony of the message they were being trained to present. (Mark 9:33-37)

This is what Church membership must resemble for a healthy spiritual Body. Each member is a representative of the Body in general, and this is why the reputation of its leaders in particular was of such concern to Paul. We are “members one of another,” (Rom 12:5) having all received a measure of Yahweh’s glory by virtue of our connection with Christ, (John 17:22, 2Pet 1:4) but our roles, past experiences, temptations and victories are individual. (1Cor 12:17-20,29) There must be mutual respect, from the oldest to the youngest, and agreement on all common activities; and in this way the work of each member will be appreciated, and seen as a vital, interlocking portion of the glorious whole.

5.3 – The Principle of The Two Witnesses

5.3.1 – A Doctrinal Tool

The Bible provides a number of tools for maintaining harmony in the Church, two of which are the principle of “Two Witnesses,” and the steps of “Gospel Order.” So important are these ideas that they are each given individual sub-sections of Chapter 5.

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The idea of two independent witnesses governs a number of diverse aspects of Church organization, and how we deal with our fellow pilgrims on the Highway of Holiness. We read in the books of Moses, “At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.” (Deu 17:6) While this first mention of the principle, which involves capital punishment, may seem like a very negative introduction of the concept to the Bible student’s experience, it is actually a safeguard against miscarriages of justice.



Emphasis Note

The way in which Yahweh handles earthly crime shows His manner of punishing sin (*e.g.*, regarding “eternal hell”)

As with the true intent of the “eye for an eye” doctrine, (Exo 21:24) the Almighty has provided instructions that prohibit the exacting of unreasonable penalties, or inflicting punishments in cases of insufficient evidence. The death penalty in particular was one that could not be undone should the accused later be exonerated, or one of the witnesses later proven false, (Exo 20:16) and therefore the Law specified that there must be at least two individuals who could testify to the crime before so grave a step was taken.

It should be noted that a “witness” is not necessarily an “eye-witness;” it would be rare indeed for a deliberate murder to be committed before several onlookers. Animals, and even inanimate objects, are sometimes considered “witnesses” to various vows and events, (Gen 21:30, Gen 31:48) because they provide confirmation that these words or actions have taken place. The Hebrew word ‘*ed*’ may refer to either personal testimonies or objects of evidence, therefore an individual accused of a crime worthy of death could have been executed under the Mosaic law on the strength of two independent, unmistakable sources of evidentiary material, which may or may not have consisted of eyewitness accounts.

The principle was applied more broadly than to only those crimes that involved death as a punishment, although that was mentioned first due to its importance. But the Scripture reads, “One witness shall not rise up against a man for *any* iniquity, or for *any* sin, in any sin that he sinneth; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” (Deu 19:15 – emphasis added) This points out that the idea of using two witnesses to establish facts in a case is to be applied broadly, and indeed it forms a key component of the Gospel Order sequence that we will discuss in the next sub-section.

When Paul applies the idea to doctrine he writes to the Church at Corinth, saying, “This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” (2Cor 13:1) It may be thought, upon reading this, that Paul is being a little free with his interpretation, since he himself would be the “witness” in both cases. But

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what we find when reading the information pertaining the Corinthian Church is that there was a long history of open transgressions, and Paul had already had to rebuke them for their misdeeds on a number of occasions. (*e.g.*, 1Cor 5:1)

Paul is not, therefore, speaking about being both witnesses for a single event or set of events. Rather, each of his visits to the congregation, complete with the attending statements of rebuke, constitutes an article of evidence against the ongoing pattern of behavior that is observed. Each time, Paul has had to address some problem, and therefore he writes that he is convinced (on the strength of the various letters and experiences while visiting) that there is chronic problem with the faith of the congregation, and harsher measures of discipline may now be required.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul reminds the young Gospel worker that accusations are not to be easily accepted against those whom Yahweh has placed in an official Church position, writing, “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” (1Tim 5:19) While it is true that no one, neither of the laity nor the clergy, is to be convicted of wrongdoing without at least two witnesses, Timothy is not even to take any reports seriously (a lesser reaction) unless it is well attested.

The Epistle to the Hebrews uses the principle to explain that those who hear the Gospel and reject it are without excuse, for “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb 10:28, 29)

Those who heard the Gospel had the benefit of the apostles’ direct testimony that Yahshua’s blood was spilled for their sakes (a testimony of which we ourselves have a record in the Bible) and also the work of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, convicting them that they were guilty before the perfect standard of the Almighty, and that they needed a Savior. As the faithful Jews demonstrated, the only proper reaction to being convinced by the Spirit and the Blood is to be pricked in the heart, and to ask, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) At this point they would be baptized, thus completing the set of witnesses on earth to the glory of God: “the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.” (1John 5:8)

Even in these very last days, a visible manifestation of the “Two Witnesses” principle will be applied to the warning of judgment that will fall upon the earth: “And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” (Rev 11:3) Yahweh will always act by agreement, even in His acts of judgment, and He will never leave humanity unwarned about coming events. (Amos 3:7)

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Creation Seventh Day Adventists, like most Protestant Christians, are very concerned with the validity of their doctrinal position. But believing one's self to be a member of the genuine Church of Christ, and a participant in the final movements in earth's history, does not mean that there are no more lessons to learn, both individually and as a corporate Body. The doctrines espoused and taught as truth in the CSDA movement are those that have been developed, as in primitive Adventism, by careful study of the Scriptures. And more, at least two independent passages must be found that indicates (clearly) the principles being applied.

Some examples of these, all of which have been covered in Volume 1 of *The Highway of Holiness*, include:

- The Seventh-day Sabbath, which is attested in Genesis at its inception, (Gen 2:3) in the Gospels as an institution unaffected by the death of the Messiah, (Luke 23:56) and in the prophecies as an eternal time of gathering and worship. (Isa 66:23)
- The Victory over Sin, which is described as the original condition of man – a part of the original creation before the fall, (Gen 1:31) the gift of Christ through the infinite sacrifice of His death, (1Pet 4:1) and the state that all who are truly born-again enjoy. (1John 5:18)
- The non-Trinitarian nature of *Elohim*, which is explained in Genesis as a model for the creation of Adam and Eve, (two holy beings – Gen 1:27) identified by Christ as a Father and Son that dwell in the hearts of believers, (John 14:23) and described by Paul as a type for the union of two individuals with differing roles but equal dignity. (1Cor 11:3)
- The conditional nature of most prophecy, which is revealed by the record of the ministries of Jonah (Jonah 3:10) and Ezekiel, (Ezek 37:28) and confirmed by the direct words of Yahweh through Jeremiah, (Jer 18:7-19) Zechariah, (Zech 11:10) and various others.

An icon for an activity note featuring a blue angel with wings, holding a pink key and a blue scroll.

Activity Note
Can you find at least two Scriptures that support each of the doctrines described in Chapters 3 and 4 of Volume 1?

The Two Witnesses principle allows us to be certain of doctrines, especially if the verses that appear to be in conflict can be harmonized – which they always can if the doctrine is genuine. The principle allows us, further, to provide powerful “*even if*” arguments in favor of the beliefs that we practice and teach to our fellow pilgrims. For example, one of the clearest verses that describe the Victory over all deliberate sin in the Bible is found here: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His Seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (1John 3:9)

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Some have said, “This doesn’t mean what it appears to mean... what it really means is that those who are born of God do not continue for a long time in known sins.” This is a severe weakening of the message that John was presenting to the Church, and is further an incorrect application of the wording that John was careful to use in his letter. Yet, because we have *many* verses that point out the same idea, we are able to say, “*Even if* 1 John 3:9 really said that, there are still a great number of other passages, such as 1 John 5:18, that tell us the very same thing in another way. That verse, for example, begins, ‘We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not,’ and the wording there cannot mean ‘does not continue for a long time in sin;’ it means precisely what it was translated to mean in English.”

5.3.2 – A Behavioral Tool

This chapter of the guidebook is involved with how Christians deal with one another in the course of sanctification. The Two Witnesses principle, far from being simply a measure of theological doctrines, has direct applicability to personal human interactions. One of the ways in which “witnesses” comes into play is in the matter of voting. In the CSDA Church, which has but one Head, (Christ) the changes to our evangelism work, and the refinement of our beliefs, are not dictated by a set of “spiritual elites” at the top of the movement’s hierarchy. Often all the members are invited to vote upon any changes made or new practices adopted for the glory of Yahweh. As we will examine later in this chapter, two witnesses who oppose for valid Biblical reasons can effectively block any change to the *status quo*, and this keeps the Body from making the mistake of the Israelites in their initial attempt to enter Canaan. (Num 13:14)

The Church being a necessarily social construct, it is natural that the members will be aware of the activities of others in their circles. With personalities, and sometimes cultures, being different, there may potentially be disagreement with the way that some practices are being followed or some activities are being undertaken. Truly, in the Scriptures we know we are to be our brothers’ keepers – which is entirely different from being a meddler or busybody (1Tim 5:13, 1Pet 4:15) – and therefore it is reasonable that one who has the conviction to speak a word of counsel or warning to his or her fellow member should do so.

The one who hears the advise or reproof has, at that point, the duty to consider these things with an attitude of humility, believing that the speaker has his or her best interests at heart, and to “esteem [the] other better” (Phil 2:3) and able to see clearly. It is not, however, necessary that the advice or warning be acted upon. The hearer may be fully aware of the best way to accomplish some goal, and, while thanking the speaker for the interest shown, may prefer to act as before. If, however, *two* witnesses come bearing the same report, it is the duty of the hearer then to carefully consider his or her way, and to consider the words being shared as a divine

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statement of concern. Even then, the individual is not *obligated* to heed, but one with the Spirit of Christ will most certainly investigate why these reports have come his or her way, and with prayer and faith, the truth will become clear, any bad habits or practices will be corrected, and all who participate in this process will be sanctified by the spirit of *agape*.

This spirit of *agape*-love is the great unifier. The Two Witnesses principle, as applied to members' behavior, is one of the main methods of love's outworking in the social setting of the congregations. It makes manageable all diversities of experience, age, spiritual ability, culture, and personality, allowing unity to be found, and agreements to be devised, that all may come into perfect one-ness regarding the Spiritual Temple of Yahweh.

5.4 – Gospel Order

Gospel Order may be seen, to some extent, as a formalization of the Two Witnesses principle. It is the doctrine based upon that underlying concept, and it has been observed in the CSDA Church that divisions *only* become problematic, and separations can *only* occur between members, when this doctrine is not strictly observed.

The process may be read in Matthew 18, where Yahshua instructs His disciples directly, and I have itemized it for clarity:

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee:

- 1) Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
- 2) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
- 3) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church.
- 4) But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:15-20)

There are three remedial steps in Gospel order, and a fourth, a penalty step, to be undertaken if all else fails. The first two of these show the Two Witnesses principle being formally employed. It should be noted that

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although the description of the process begins with, “if thy brother shall trespass against thee,” we must understand this broadly. It does not merely mean if one has harmed you personally this process may be used. The Messiah taught, “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me.” (Mat 25:40) If a member sees another abusing someone else, abusing him or her self, or setting a bad example to the flock and the world in general, they may well – and rightly – feel offended, and should bring these concerns to the one who has trespassed.

The third step shows an extension of Gospel Order, but not without precedent. We find in the Scriptures that when a crime was confirmed by the testimony of two witnesses, the entire community became involved to mete out the punishment. (Num 15:34) In the case of the Church system, the offender has one final opportunity to submit to the Body (having been considered guilty by two independent witnesses already); and failing this the transgressor is disfellowshipped.

This means that there are no “private” disfellowship hearings, removing entirely the temptation for disagreements between individuals to escalate out of control until one of the disputers is forced to leave the congregation. It has the additional safeguard of allowing uninvolved parties to speak on behalf of the one being subjected to potential discipline, should the two witnesses against him or her be ignorant of some relevant factor.



Emphasis Note

In keeping with Yahweh’s character, even the most severe forms of discipline are designed to express love and healing.

There is a clear distinction to be made here between a disfellowship and a “kicking-out,” as if the Bride of Christ were a social club. There are two important differences. First, a disfellowshipped individual is not barred from attending the worship services of the Church. On the contrary, there are not to be any personal “ill feelings” between the member who is disfellowshipped and those who are in the Church. The former member is encouraged to study, and learn, and perhaps find the place of error so that unity can be restored. Second, disfellowship is not a human act. In other words, a vote to have a member disfellowshipped is not based on any consideration of man, or a punishment imposed upon the recipient by the congregation – it is a revelation. A vote to disfellowship means that the person who is removed from membership is simply seeing the judgment of Heaven revealed, rather than being decided. This process merely allows the material world to properly reflect the spiritual, so that Yahweh’s will “be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.”(Mat 6:10)

The Church, upon a formal meeting in Step 3, has the responsibility of deciding the reliability of the witness’ testimony, the quality of the course of action in question, and whatsoever penalties may be required by the

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activity. It is extremely important for a Church Body's validity to remember that the highest form of punishment that any ecclesiastical organization can Biblically impose is the motion to disfellowship. There are no other recourses open, for the Scriptures tell us, "what have I to do to judge them also that are without [the Church]? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1Cor 5:12, 13) Any appeals to human power, civil government, or military might in order to resolve a matter of faith and doctrine is entirely alien to the character and revealed will of the Creator. It is Yahweh who deals with those who transgress after they have been removed from membership in the Body of the Son.

5.5 – The Authority of Members

Christianity is generally revealed to be a "conservative" system of beliefs, not merely in the political sense, but also in terms of progress. This does not mean that progress is *slow*; there are often times of rapid change, such as during the Great Awakening of the 1800s. Further, Yahweh will not allow His people to fall behind the times, for prophets and reformers will appear to ensure that the course of sanctification does not lag. (Mark 1:2)

What "conservative" means in this context is that progress tends to give a high degree of regard to the ones who have gone before in faith. Christ certainly taught this by His doctrine and example, quoting freely from the books of the Old Testament, and refining, rather than altering, existing doctrine. Indeed, it may be said that the Messiah taught very little that was actually *new*, but instead corrected the views of the population and provided demonstrative examples that were relevant for the current age.

Similarly, as present truth has gone forward, the workers for Christ are constantly checking their work against the Old Testament records, the teachings of Christ, the letters of the Apostles, the testimony of the early Church fathers, and the writings of the pioneers. The rule of doctrine is given in the Scriptures as the "Law and the Testimony," (Isa 8:20) and any new idea that would conflict with either of these is discarded.

It is with this spirit, (that the *status quo* is assumed to be correct unless there is an indication by strong evidence that there is need for improvement) that the authority of individual members comes into the picture. This conservative bent is what keeps the doctrines and practices of the Church from spiraling away into chaos, or giving too much authority to any one individual or set thereof. It is what keeps the teachings of the Body consistent over time, and among the congregations, unless the bright light of Heaven reveals a demand for change.

The Two Witnesses principle, when applied to the voting process, reveals this concept. Votes are always phased in such a way that the current state of affairs will be altered by a "Yea" vote, so that two witnesses opposed to

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an action (voting “Nay”) will block it from being accomplished. Examples include:

- Voting to accept a new member (the *status quo* is that the person is not yet a member, so a “Yea” vote changes this and two witnesses voting “Nay” can block it)
- Voting to disfellowship a current member (the *status quo* is that the person is a member, so a “Yea” vote changes this and two witnesses voting “Nay” can block it)
- Voting to alter an existing practice or adopt a new one (the *status quo* is the current set of doctrines and practices, so a “Yea” vote changes this and two witnesses voting “Nay” can block it)

Calling a vote to preserve the current state, *e.g.*, calling a vote to *reject* an applicant, to *retain* membership of an individual under discipline, or to *avoid* adopting or changing a practice, not only puts a negative connotation on the activities being proposed, but also means that two “Nay” votes actually accomplish the change, rather than preventing it. The sole exception to this, when dealing with voting members of the same family, is outlined in the next section. This “Two Witnesses” method, in a congregation of sanctified individuals, works far better than the mere “majority rules” concept, and had it been followed properly in Israel, a great tragedy would have been avoided.

Precedent for this application of the Two Witnesses doctrine comes from the history of that tragedy. It is found in the Book of Numbers, as mentioned in the previous section; specifically this passage:

“And [the twelve spies] returned from searching of the land [of Canaan] after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, ‘We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.’

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.’

“But the men that went up with him said, ‘We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.’ And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, ‘The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that

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eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.’

“And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And they said one to another, ‘Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.’

“And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes; and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, ‘The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If Yahweh delight in us then He will bring us into this land and give it us, a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against Yahweh, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and Yahweh is with us: fear them not.’” (Num 13:25-33, 14:1, 4, 6-9)

Unfortunately, the two witnesses here were not heeded, and the people brought upon themselves a great curse for their unbelief. Here we see the principle of CSDA voting revealed dramatically. Ten witnesses were sent into Canaan to see what it was like. The *status quo* was that, upon their return, the people were to go forward and possess it. The spies were not sent in to determine whether or not the land *could* be taken, for Yahweh had already promised His people that it could.

Instead, upon their return, ten of the spies wished to change that existing plan. Based upon their fearful testimony, they won wide popular support by the congregation. Yet, in the midst of this tide of unbelief, two witnesses voted, “Nay,” saying, “Let us not alter the course upon which we have been placed. Let us go up and take the land.” Had these two witnesses been heeded, and the motion informally made to change Yahweh’s instructions been rejected, how very different would the spiritual history of Israel, and the entire world, be?

How much more archaeological evidence of the Exodus would have been found in Canaan, rather than buried and forgotten in the wilderness? How much more history of Yahweh’s working with His people under more favorable conditions would have been recorded? How many more souls would have been saved, both that day and this? The ones who fell during the forty years in the desert had much for which to repent during their subsequent wanderings.

The mechanics of the congregation vote allows for three opinions to be expressed: **Yea**, **Nay**, and **Don’t Know**. Yeas are cast in favor of the proposed action, and Nays against it. Don’t Know votes are an allowance made by those who are not sure if the course of action is the correct one. Those who vote this way are not expressly opposing the change, but require

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more information before being able to support it with a clear conscience. As such, those who vote “Don’t Know” are asked if any discussion or further inquiry will allow them to move to one decided position or the other. If the individual remains undecided, the Don’t Know is counted as a Nay when deciding whether or not to adopt the change, in keeping with the conservative premise of voting, and to accord with the Scriptures that say, “[It is not good] that the soul be without knowledge; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth,” (Pro 19:2) and “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” (Rom 14:5b)

The authority of individual members has other applications as well. Members of the Body of Christ have the authority, even as individuals (although the force is strengthened when “two or more” cooperate) to bless others, (Mat 5:44) to pray for sickness, to cast out demons, (Mat 10:8) to evangelize and baptize new converts (baptism, while generally done by the Body with an elder officiating, *can* be done by any member should the need arise) and many other activities outlined in the Bible. (Mat 28:19) In the faithful Church there is not as great a division between the clergy and the laity as are found in many forms of Christendom. Each one has a place to fill, and a role to perform for the glory of the Master.

5.6 – The Family Unit

The one place in which the voting process differs from that which is described above concerns the family unit. This is also a practice found in the words of Scripture, and seen through the teachings of the Messiah. Specifically we read, “Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers with the number of their names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel, thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.” (Num 1:2-4) In another place we read, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Yahshua” (Gal 3:28) The same author as wrote Galatians, however, also says, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” (1Tim 2:12)

These three verses are in perfect harmony. It results in this uniform concept: In Israel, and subsequently in Spiritual Israel, the “polls” or counts are taken according to the families, and registered under the names of the males over twenty years old. At the same time, since there is no “male or female” in Christ, the women and the young do not lose their voices either, although their roles continue to be different than those of the adult males in the Christian congregation.

What follows, therefore, is an incorporation of this idea into the voting practice described in Section 5.5. When taking a vote, if all the members of

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a single family vote in the same way, this is counted as ONE “Yea,” “Nay,” or “Don’t Know,” as attributed to the head of the household. If, however, the wife or children vote differently, this is taken into account. The age requirement of “20” is not strictly observed for young people in the New Covenant, but a voting (*i.e.*, baptized) member is considered to have sufficient maturity to voice an opinion. If, therefore, the husband votes “Yea” and the wife “Nay,” this is counted as two separate votes, and the same goes for the children. This ensures that a single family, which may have conscious or unconscious agendas, cannot unduly manipulate the course of the entire Body. It also allows both a unity of all family members, and also an opportunity to express individual opinions and desires.

The following table (5.1) shows examples of the details of this arrangement:

Member	Individual Vote	Family Vote(s)
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Yea Yea Yea Yea	1 Yea
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Nay Nay Nay Nay	1 Nay
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Don’t Know Don’t Know Don’t Know Don’t Know	1 Don’t Know
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Any combination of Yea and Nay votes	1 Yea 1 Nay
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Any combination of Yea and Don’t Know votes	1 Yea 1 Don’t Know
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Any combination of Nay and Don’t Know votes	1 Nay 1 Don’t Know
Husband Wife Child1 Child2	Any combination of Yea, Nay and Don’t Know votes	1 Yea 1 Nay 1 Don’t Know

Table 5.1 – Family Voting

As with the authority of individual members, the concept of the family unit goes far beyond activities within the Church setting like the voting process. The responsibility placed upon the husband/male or the mother in a single-parent household is greater than that of the others. The qualifications listed earlier in this chapter of the requirements for an elder or deacon show the Christian ideal, a home in which the male figure is a representative of the divine priest to the rest of the family. While it is true that the males and females are equal (as are the children!) in the eyes of the Almighty, He has

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nevertheless assigned specific functions that reveal His own place in the Godhead, and that of His Son, to humanity as an object lesson.

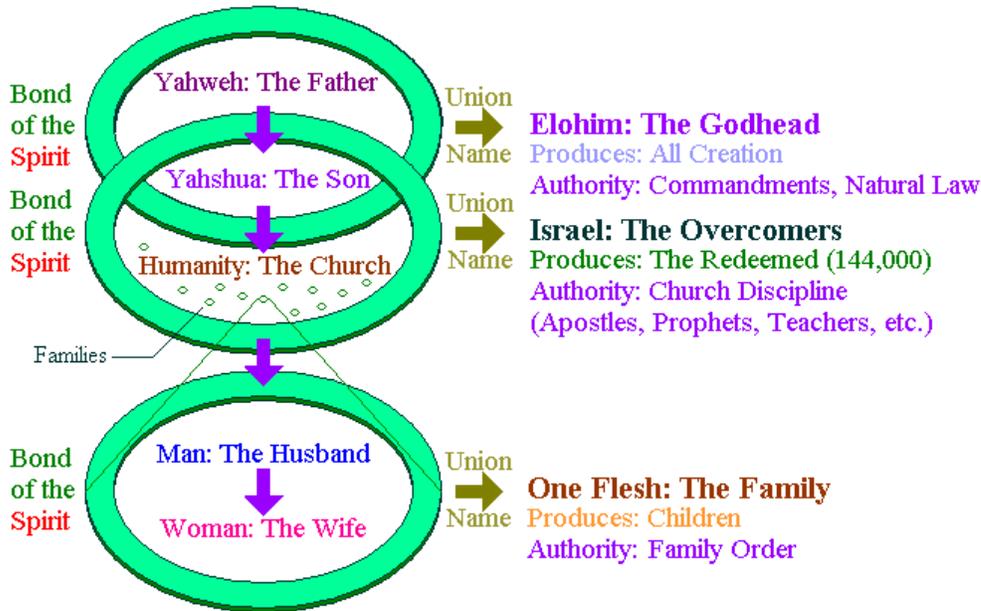


Figure 5.2 – The Divine Order

The difference between *role* and *worth* needs to be better understood in Christendom. The Father and Son of the Godhead, for example, are equal in worth, while the Son performs a subservient role. (John 14:28) The Church and Christ are, in the eyes of the Father, equal in worth. This is explained by implication, that the Father was willing to sacrifice the Son for our sakes, (John 3:16) and also by Scriptural declaration. We read, “For whom [Yahweh] did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom 8:29) Yet despite this equal worth, we are certainly not, even as a collective Church, in the same role as the Son regarding authority and spiritual strength. “But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” (1Cor 11:3)

In that verse we see the order revealed in its fullness. There is “headship,” authority appointed by Heaven, between the equal partners in each of these three levels of the arrangement. While humanity is never to consider itself “equal” with God, the righteousness of the Son is imputed to every believer, as long as he or she remains within the subservient role established for mankind to occupy. Similarly, the Scriptures contain many examples of the women and children of a family fulfilling a role that is entirely unlike that of the fathers and husbands; yet if any of these were missing what would the “family” be?

The Father and Son are One in Spirit, despite their different roles. The Husband and Wife are One in flesh, (Eph 5:31) although they retain their

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individuality and adopt the roles laid out in the Bible. In all these, the Holy Spirit serves as a bond that produces and maintains the products of that union in accordance with the “creative” element of the Godhead in whose image humanity was made.

The purpose of the Husband in the family unit is to function as the head, the priest and the lawgiver. (Eph 5:23) The purpose of the Wife in the family unit is to function as the body, the suitable helper and the one who confirms the family law and thus makes it honorable, as did the Son to the Father. (Gen 2:18, Isa 42:21) The purpose of the Child in the home is to function as the member of that Body under discipline of learning, as the helper to the father and mother, and as the one who obeys and is refined by the law of the home. (Exo 20:12, Col 3:20)

5.7 – Summary

- 1) Yahweh has ordained an ordered structure for His New Testament Church, just as He did for the nation of Israel, to function as a sanctifying environment for believers and a foundation for evangelical work.
- 2) While Church order is to be respected, it is not to be considered a replacement for the individual’s conscience.
- 3) Both doctrinal decisions and acceptable behavior for Church members are subject to the principle of “Two Witnesses.”
- 4) Gospel Order, an outgrowth and extension of the Two Witnesses principle, is to be strictly observed for the maintenance of order and propriety in the Body.
- 5) Votes in the Church Body are called in order to alter the existing status of doctrines and practices; two individual votes to avoid undertaking the proposed action will block it from going forward.
- 6) Votes by individual members of the same family are considered one vote if all the members vote the same way. Differences are counted as individual votes.
- 7) The family unit, as a visible representation of the Godhead, contains specific roles that, while not reducing the worth of any family member, demonstrate the expected behavior of husbands, wives and children.

Chapter 6: A Sure Roadmap

Topics: The Bible, The Spirit of Prophecy Writings, The Laws of God, The Principles of Bible Study

Chapter 6.1 – The Scriptures as The Foundation

6.1.1 – The Authority of The Word

We read in the Scriptures, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2Tim 3:16, 17)

What we need to understand about that statement, however, is that it is addressed to those who already believe. Attempting to convince a non-believer about the Bible’s validity from a verse *in* the Bible is not going to make any headway, for that would not be even one independent witness to the fact. Thus, the wisdom of Paul’s words are of benefit only to those who have already accepted the Scriptures as the revelation of Yahweh’s word.

Unbelievers need to be convinced of the Bible’s accuracy by an appeal to other things such as the fulfillment of the Scripture’s prophecy in history, (*e.g.*, Daniel’s prediction about the progression of kingdoms since Babylon) the visible benefits of obeying the Bible’s laws of health and spirituality, the revelation of the character of the Savior in its pages, and other things.

For the believer we read the purpose that the Bible was given. Scripture is used to learn, develop and correct doctrine. It is used to teach humanity what Yahweh considers “righteousness,” and it provides the guideposts on the path of sanctification, that those who follow it may be found acceptable in the Day of Judgment. In addition, and strongly connected to these ideas, we find that the Bible reveals who the Creator is, so that when the appeal is made to “worship Him that made Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters,” (Rev 14:7) we may be able to say “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that Day.” (2Tim 1:12)

For the Christian, the benefits of Bible study include these:

- To know whom Yahweh is, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom 10:7)
- To learn doctrine, and develop a sanctified lifestyle (2Tim 3:16, 17, as quoted above)
- To see examples of how those who worship Yahweh and follow Yahshua reach out to others, both unbelievers and those who have espoused some doctrinal error (Exo 4:31, Acts 3:19)

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- To confirm one's faith for upcoming trials by reading examples of the protection of the Creator toward His people in the past (1Cor 10:11)

If these objectives are diligently sought, they will surely be obtained, for the Messiah told those who heard Him teach, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Mat 7:7-11)

The Good News about Yahweh as revealed in the Bible, far from simply being a guidebook to Church-activities and the "spiritual part of life," is a document provided to us through the Creator's providence to instruct us how to live healthy and holy lives in every respect, for "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Mat 4:4)

6.1.2 – The Two Ditches

There are two ditches into which the sincere student may unwittingly fall, and either of these errors will severely limit the effectiveness of Bible study, ultimately leading – in very many cases, to apostasy of one form or another.

The first of these ditches involves a kind of pride in which the Bible student believes that he or she may obtain all necessary knowledge from the Scriptures without the help of anyone else. The danger of this concept is that it sounds very much true. It is certainly true that Yahweh saves individuals *as* individuals, and we need no one but the Savior to accomplish this. At the same time, those solitary students who have the opportunity for cooperative study, and the community of believers, are rejecting the very means by which the Savior may be seeking to individually save him or her!

If we see our fellow human beings as obstacles to our spiritual growth, rather than potential helpers in our doctrinal development, we have not yet learned the second-most important lesson the Bible has for us, that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. What meaning will our righteousness have when compared to Christ's, who gave up all He had to go among the people for their own sakes? And what better way to help others to grow as Christians than to study the Word with them, sharing ideas and being willing to learn in return?

The Scriptures speak directly to this danger. The stand-alone student may be tempted to simply say, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak

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not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ (Isa 8:20) I need no one else to help me interpret the Bible!” The verse is true, but the application is not. Isaiah 8 was not written to single believers or individual families out as Churches unto themselves, for Isaiah himself wrote, four verses earlier, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.” (Isa 8:16) The disciples (plural) are the “epistles read of all men” that Paul mentions in his letter to the Corinthians, (2Cor 3:2) and Peter says even more directly, “Knowing this *first*, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” (2Pet 1:20)

Although Peter singles out prophecy, we know from other places that this applies to all doctrine. We read, for example, “Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” (Pro 11:14) Simply put, those who despise the fellowship of believers, worshipping according to the dictates of their own opinions to the exclusion of all others, cannot be sanctified and prepared for the society of the angels and saints in the world to come. They will have simply unfitted themselves for the holy lifestyle of the New Heavens and New Earth. We read in the letter to the Hebrews, “And having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, (for He is faithful that promised) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Heb 10:21-25)

A portion of the above passage was read in the previous chapter, but here we see the full impact, and it is made even more dramatic as we continue to read, for the letter then goes on to speak of those who, despising the support and encouragement of the brethren, fell away into apostasy, ultimately forsaking their own salvation. This is a serious matter indeed, and it is necessary to understand that the gifts our Father provides for us are not merely for our enjoyment alone, but also for our necessary requirements.

The Bible tells us that the teachers, prophets, pastors and apostles are given to the Church for the specific purpose (among others) of sanctifying the believers and making them perfect for the trials ahead. (Eph 4:11, 12)

The other error is the opposite extreme of the above. The one who accepts the message may be so “humble” that he or she feels unwilling or unworthy to think as an individual, and is always seeking another to interpret for him or her. Some may be driven to this position by fear of pride, fear of the first ditch. Likewise, some may be driven to pride for fear of being seen as foolish or weak. In either case, fear is the unbalancing factor that will tip a Bible student off of the straight but narrow middle ground upon which Christ is leading

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The one so weak in faith finds the he or she is not truly developing a relationship with the Savior, but rather a relationship with the priest, pastor or elder of choice. While relationships built upon the unity all believers have in Christ is important for spiritual development, it is an extremely unhealthy thing if the outward relationship is used as a replacement for that unity.

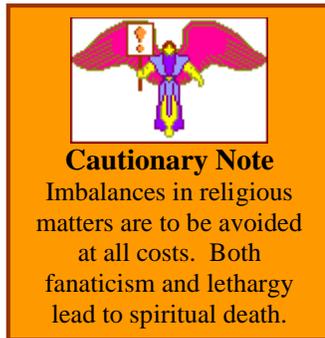
We are told, “O taste and see that Yahweh is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.” (Psalm 34:8) This is an instruction given to each individual; it is not an experience that can be transferred one to another. In Volume 1 of *The Highway of Holiness*, Chapter 4.10, the parable of the Ten Virgins was examined in some depth. That teaching also reveals the same principle, for when the five wise virgins say to the five foolish, “We cannot give you of our oil,” this is not a statement grounded in any selfish consideration, but rather a statement of truth, that the Holy Spirit that leads to salvation must be received by each individual member of the united Body of Christ.

Finally, Paul instructs believers, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Yahshua the Messiah is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2Cor 13:5) In other words, we have the ability to know, for ourselves, whether or not our relationship with the Savior is intact. It is a knowledge that comes, not from impressions or feelings, but from an implicit trust in the promises made to us in the Word that is the foundation of our faith.

Finding the balance between the two extremes described above is of the greatest importance. We are both servants of others, and in a position to need the service of others ourselves. This perfect system was set in place by the Creator to remind men that they are both creatures of mud and creatures formed in the image of Yahweh Himself. This arrangement, though ideal, is quite delicate due to the unstable nature of mankind since the fall... and even the dedicated

follower of Christ, who has committed to putting away all transgression and fleshly dispositions, is advised to “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 12:36)

Sanctification is not a difficult thing, but it is impossible for the mind set on the flesh. (Rom 8:6) By individual Bible study, along with the humility to seek the counsel and encouragement of others, the spiritual aspects of the life are given exercise, and all that dies of the true Bible student is that which would itself lead to death.



Chapter 6.2 – The Greater and Lesser Light

Seventh-day Adventists are known for, among other things, their use of the writings of Ellen White. There is much misunderstanding in the rest of Christendom regarding precisely how these writings are used, but unfortunately the fault for this one lies not in Christendom, but in Adventism.

As with the study of the Scriptures themselves, there are two equal and opposite errors regarding the body of work referred to by those within Adventism as the “Spirit of Prophecy.” This name comes from the Scriptures, for we read that, “the dragon was wroth with the Woman, (*i.e.*, the Church) and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev 12:17) We are then told, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev 19:10b)

Adventists concluded, from the very earliest days, that this Seed of the Woman was the Seventh-day Adventist movement. Obviously, they had the commandments of God understood, being one of the few Sabbath-keeping groups that revered the Son of Yahweh. But, they also needed the “spirit of prophecy” to fully meet the criteria described in John’s Revelation. With the ministry of Ellen G. White, this element was met, and dramatically so. From that day to this, the rest of the Christian world – with a few notable exceptions – has done its best to diminish the validity of her work, subjecting it to analysis that relies not upon the content of what she has written, but the faulty interpretations already placed upon the Scriptures against which it is compared.

The defense of the things Ellen White has written is a topic outside the scope of this guidebook; the purpose here is to reveal the manner in which these writings are used, and how they are viewed in light of the Bible’s authority over the believer.

First, there is no error in the Adventist interpretation of the verses from Revelation quoted above. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does keep the commandments of God, at least outwardly, in all divisions of the main body. Most if not all have a degree of respect for Mrs. White’s writings, and her words have certainly been an inspiration to those both within and without the denomination. There is a potential error, however, in believing that the “Spirit of Prophecy” ended with the last thing Ellen White wrote, or was withdrawn from the world when she died.

The Scriptures tell us plainly, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:28, 29; and quoted by Peter in Acts 2)

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There is no limitation here to one or a few people. As Moses said, “Would God that all Yahweh’s people were prophets, and that Yahweh would put His Spirit upon them!” (Num 11:29) This desire is fulfilled in the Church of these last days.

This is not to say either, however, that although any member of the Church of Yahshua has access to a prophetic gift (to one degree or another) the writings of Ellen White do not have a particular role to play. They assuredly do. One need only be careful to keep away from the two errors mentioned above.

The first error is to disregard the *Spirit of Prophecy* writings entirely. The Scriptures tell us that the Church of Christ will have prophets, and *more* in the last days, not less. There is absolutely no indication that spiritual gifts were ever to be removed from the experience of the Christian, yet many Churches believe that the gifts are either absent, or somehow less important today than they were in the days of the apostles’ ministry. The unfortunate truth is that these gifts are simply outside the experience of most believers, and – as they have not personally been witness to the manifest power of God – they often conclude that they are missing, for the ask, in pride and self-importance, “Why has God not shown these things to *me*?”

Elohim is certainly willing to make His wonders known to all men, but He cannot, as we have said before, consistently do so outside the context of a covenant. Let the doubter keep the commandments of God, let him testify, “I have the faith of Jesus,” and cease to commit known sin. Let those who are hesitant take hold of the garment of the Savior, and unite with the people of God, and there will be wonders indeed. But let them also avoid this first error, and obey the instruction, “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.” (1Th 5:19, 20)

One of the reasons many people fall into the above error is to escape from the second (we see the parallel here between these errors and those that involve the Bible). The second error is to consider the writings of Ellen White on equal footing with the Scriptures.

Consider the writings of Paul. He wrote far more than the dozen-or-so letters we have recorded in the canonical New Testament, and some, like the *Epistle to The Laodiceans*, are mentioned in his preserved works. (Col 4:16) The providence of Yahweh, however, preserved only a few letters which would prove timeless, relevant until the end of the age and suitable for study by believers in every generation. Christians do not believe that the Almighty ever errs in what He initiates or allows, therefore the writings of Paul that were lost were allowed to be lost. There were, no doubt, things Paul addressed in his correspondences that were intricately linked to the conditions facing the believers in the first century, and would perhaps cause misunderstandings if read two thousand years later. Indeed, some of the things that were preserved cause questions in the minds of some.

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With more modern writers, like Ellen White, we have almost every word written during the course of ministry, some of which are eternal principles, and some of which were intended to address particular individuals or circumstances. It is a mistake, therefore, to take the position (that some have taken, to their loss) that “If Ellen White taught it, we have to do it.”

The CSDA position on the Bible is that it is an eternal Work. It may contain “some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest,” (2Pet 3:16) but this is only an invitation to study deeply and widely, with the humility necessary to seek counsel and apply what is learned. The position on Ellen White’s writings is that it is an inspired commentary on this far greater work. They are to be read for principles, rather than specifics, and to be subjected to questions such as, “To whom was this passage written? When was it written? *Why* was it written?”

One example that comes readily to mind is the caution in the writings of Ellen White against riding bicycles. To this day, there are some Seventh-day Adventists who will not ride a bicycle; yet a patient examination of the context of that statement reveals that the concern of the author was not that these methods of transportation had nothing to do with the rider’s health, or the moral content of these things. In the days of that writing there was a strong tendency of bike riders to race competitively, and the disapproval being voiced indicated the need to avoid worldly competition, gambling, and other concepts that are out of harmony with the Kingdom of Heaven.

Of course, such questions as are listed above are of benefit to the student when reading the Bible’s sixty-six books as well, but it must be remembered that the intent of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings are different. The Bible tells us, “Believe in Yahweh your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2Ch 20:20)

The Bible contains everything necessary for the salvation of man. With prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, an individual with a willing heart may be “established” in this life, and prepared for the age to come. At the same time, the words of the latter prophets contain much information that, if the principles are understood in their right setting and applied, will contribute greatly to the spiritual (and sometimes material) prosperity of the believer.

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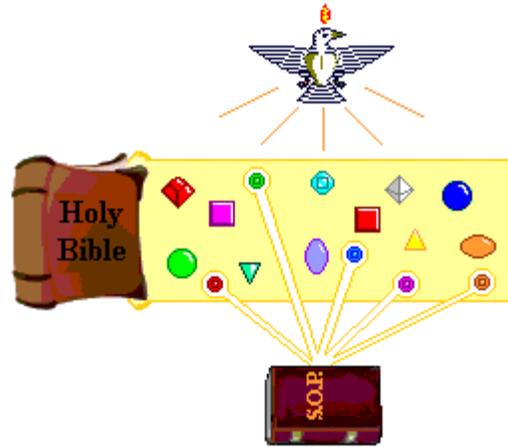


Figure 6.1 – The Greater and Lesser Lights

The writings of Ellen White, and other Adventist authors, are considered a “Lesser Light” to the Bible’s ultimate truth, serving not to replace or supercede anything that has come before, but to illuminate the little gems that so often go unnoticed amidst the flood of divine light. Some have asked, “Why do we need a ‘lesser light,’ since we already have the Bible?” The question itself contains, in a sense, the answer. Christians, particularly in these last days, have become self-sufficient in their own eyes. They say, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” (Rev 3:17) There is nothing wrong with “goods,” either material or spiritual. There is absolutely nothing lacking in the Word of God; yet the study of this Word has not led all men to the submissive, humble mindset required to walk the path of sanctification.

Instead of saying, “I have everything I need,” the attitude of the convert will be, “I need all that God will send me.” This does not mean that we automatically accept every body of writing that claims to be inspired, or every messenger who claims to be sent by Heaven. We have ways to measure the spiritual accuracy of any work or utterance of man. While some of these methods will be examined in detail in the next chapter, Section 7.4, it bears mentioning here that the most important of these is to compare new light with the old, in accordance with the “conservative” nature of Christianity described above.

Creation Seventh Day Adventists use the writings of Ellen White as they were intended. We do not need the Spirit of Prophecy works to tell us that Yahshua died for our sins, or that Yahweh is love, or that the commandments of God are eternal. We do not need these writings to instruct us in doctrine, for every doctrine of the Church is founded squarely in the Books of the Old and New Testament. Yet we find much by way of practical instruction in the minutia of life; advice about diet that we may “eat, or drink, [and] do all to the glory of God;” (1Cor 10:31) advice about recreation, dress and the treatment of illness. These things, it must be remembered, are not commands, but good things to consider for those who wish to be pleasing to the Father and Son in all their ways. They are, in the

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view of those who have benefited thereby, gifts from our loving Father in Heaven through a willing instrument.

Chapter 6.3 – The Laws of God

One of the most important items of information offered in the Bible, and somewhat emphasized in the writings of Ellen White, is the Law of God. This is not, as one might expect, merely the Law as the word is used of the Ten Commandments, the Levitical rituals and the appointed times. Yahshua referred to knowledge obtained even from the “poetic” books like the Psalms as the Law, (John 10:43, *cf.*, Psa 82:6) and for good reason.

The essence of the Law in the Bible is *agape*, the perfect divine love that is perfectly identified with the person of Yahweh, for we are told specifically, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is *agape*.” (1John 4:8) Whatsoever reveals Yahweh is “Law,” and any activity that draws us nearer to Him in character is truly a law for the lives of those who are faithful to His cause.

For the sake of our human limitations, the underlying principle of *agape* has required explanation. Were the understanding of human beings naturally divine, there would only need to be one law: “Have *agape*.” But unlike the unfallen angels, who have never had firsthand experience with the guilt of sin, Paul points out that we who are of Adam’s heritage needed to have an itemized list of instructions; in other words, “the law [...] was added because of transgressions.” (Gal 3:19) Divine love remains the underlying principle upon which “hang all the law and the prophets,” (Mat 22:40) but for humanity’s sake we are given further elaboration.

The Law of God comes to us, therefore, in several distinct areas.

We first have the Moral Law, which instructs humanity on general behavior toward the Creator and our fellow humans. The clearest expression of the moral law is the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. These ten concepts express what Yahweh means when He says, “Love me, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

How do we love Yahweh? It is not by mere feelings, but:

- By worshipping Him as supreme
- By having no idolatrous objects to distract our attention from His life-giving presence
- By respecting His name in both our words and our behavior as His representatives,
- By setting aside a time that He has already sanctified to receive the blessing of spiritual communion

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And how do we love our fellow man? It is not by mere feelings, or a desire that they succeed and be happy, but:

- By honoring our fathers and mothers, who constitute our first experiences in the world with other people
- By not needlessly depriving others of life
- By remaining faithful to the covenant of marriage, and holding it as sacred both for ourselves and our fellow men
- By refraining from depriving others of their possessions
- By providing an honest report of all men
- By avoiding envy of others' success and prosperity

These are eternal principles that ought never to be set aside in the course of human interaction with the divine and the earthly.

Next we have the ceremonial law. Just as, had human nature been divine we would have needed only one brief statement of "Law," so the degenerating influence of the pagan society in Egypt dictated that the early Hebrews should have a secondary law to point out the application of the Decalogue.

Yahweh, in His infinite wisdom, introduced nothing that was truly new in the ceremonial law. He instituted a system of rituals that pointed to the Tabernacle that already existed in Heaven, (Exo 25:9) and to the death and resurrection of the Messiah who, although yet to come, was already pledged as a sacrifice for fallen man. (1Pet 1:18-20) He constructed a framework of activities around a pre-existing calendar of appointed and holy times, (Gen 1:14 – where the word "seasons" in the KJV is more accurately translated "appointed times") and He injected symbolic meaning into those things that would be necessary for survival as a civilization: the seasons, the harvest, and the daily food. (Lev 11, etc.)

There are other, perceptually more abstract, laws as well. Yet, although these instructions and concepts are not as clearly codified as the ceremonial and eternal laws, they are no less important for our success and happiness.

The Health Laws of the Bible have their most detailed expression in the words of Moses, (*e.g.*, Leviticus 11 and the dietary code that prohibited the use of "unclean" meats as food) yet just like circumcision and other aspects of the "Law of Moses," (John 7:23) it is based on practices that pre-dated that particular messenger. Noah, for example, knew the difference between animals that are called "clean" and those that were "unclean." (Gen 7:2, 8; 8:20) There was nothing about the given Law that made certain animals unsuitable for healthy consumption, just as there was nothing about the Cross of Yahshua that purified unclean meats.

It is a common misconception that Noah was instructed to eat all kinds of animals after the flood, based upon the verse in which Yahweh says to him, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green

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herb have I given you all things.” (Gen 9:3) Thus, some reason, the animals that were “unclean” as a sacrifice were nevertheless “clean” for eating. It would, further, be impossible for Noah to begin eating all kinds of animals, including the unclean, right after the flood... we note that of the animals to be preserved on the Ark Noah was instructed, “Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.” (Gen 7:2)

The clean animals had seven of each kind, one for the sacrifice after the subsiding of the waters, (Gen 8:20) and then three pairs for breeding three times more rapidly than those that were unclean. It is obvious that if Noah and his sons ate from the unclean animals at that time, they would quickly become extinct; but Yahweh’s perfect economy allowed for the clean animals to be bred for food as well as for their continued existence.

The health laws date back to Eden, wherein Yahweh outlined the diet that was best for man’s use, “And Elohim said, ‘Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.’” (Gen 1:29) After access to the Tree of Life was curtailed after the fall into sin, this diet was expanded to fit humanity’s new (and more challenging) lifestyle. (Gen 3:18)

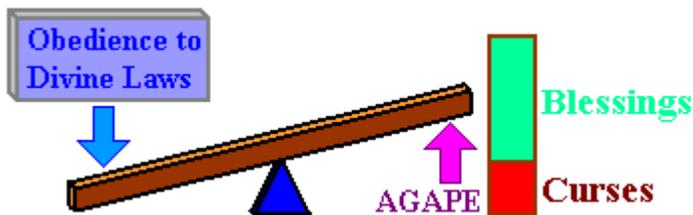


Figure 6.2 – The Blessings and the Curses

The law of cause-and-effect, although not called by this specific name in the language of Scripture, is taught clearly in a great many places. We are told, for example, “As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.” (Pro 26:2) Again, “Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood; so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.” (Pro 30:33) “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.” (Pro 23:29, 30)

We see, then, that if we do certain things, we may expect that certain results are sure to follow. This applies to a wide range of life’s arenas, including health, prosperity, diplomacy, and business, and is at its core an expression of divine love and order working in the natural world.

Thus far, all the principles above are constant, and available for the use of both Christians and non-believers. In other words, cause leads to effect for

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everyone, at every time, whether or not one believes in the presence and power of the Almighty. There is, however, a subtle difference in the way cause-and-effect works for those who believe in spiritual power. There is another law called the *Law of Correspondences*, which states basically that the spiritual world can affect the material, and vice versa.

In addition to the verses above, we find another principle working that, while it does not in the least invalidate anything that has been revealed, will nevertheless shape the outcomes that are witnessed. We are told, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28) We further see Yahweh’s personal involvement in the way things progress for His people, “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Yahweh thy Almighty, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am Yahweh that healeth thee.” (Exo 15:26)

Moses set before the Israelites, in addition to the natural laws, a spiritual law also, an expression of the Law of Correspondences: “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim, which I command you this day, and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.” (Deu 11:26, 28)

Sometimes, it is difficult to separate the natural from the spiritual laws, for many of Yah’s commandments were designed to naturally keep the human body in its best operating condition: body, mind and spirit. This is indeed as it should be, for it was the original plan in creation that there should be a smooth continuum between the body and the spirit. Because of the fall, we find that there is now hostility between the natural flesh and the spirit, “and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” (Gal 5:18) unless the born-again experience suppresses the “deeds of the flesh” through the atonement provided by Yahshua. (Rom 8:13)

Even so, sometimes the correspondence between the material and spiritual world is expressed so clearly that there is obviously no “natural” (as men consider natural) explanation; these are the miracles that Yahshua and His followers perform and experience. The raising of Lazarus to life, the turning of water into wine, the resurrection itself... these things appear to be outside the normal operation of cause and effect, until we remember that Yahweh Himself is the Cause, and the various events, even if supernatural, along the way are the great Effect He brings about for our good. The Christian is the one who acknowledges these things, and enjoys both the great benefits and great responsibilities that this acknowledgement brings.

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There are, as always, two errors that can be made regarding the interaction between the laws of nature and the law of correspondences. The first is to disbelieve the latter.

The pure materialist believes only in what his or her limited senses are able to convey under circumstances that are ever less than ideal. This kind of error is rarely mentioned in the Bible, for “unbelief,” generally means that one disbelieves in Yahweh and Yahshua, not that one has no faith in spiritual things at all. There is, as such, no *particular* condemnation for atheists and agnostics in the words of Scripture; however, there are also no blessings associated with these absolute standpoints non-belief, including those that result in justification, sanctification and eternal life. The statement, “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life,” (1John 15:12) is as true for the pagan as it is for the one who believes in nothing at all beyond this material phase.

The second error is not to disbelieve completely, but to disbelieve some aspect of the Father and Son, and thus – while believing in the spiritual world – exploiting the principle of correspondence.

We do see examples of this in the Bible: idolatry, witchcraft, heresies, and the like. We find in Acts 8 the record of Simon Magus, who “bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one.” (Acts 8:9) We do not know the extent of Simon’s spiritual powers, whether he was using true sorcery, or trickery (the Bible does not make much of a distinction between these two ideas) to sway his audience, but it is certain that he exploited *their* beliefs in the supernatural for his own ends.



Activity Note

Can you think of other kinds of laws in the Bible, and the results obtained by those who abused or neglected them?

Others who have abused spiritual principles include the girl possessed by the divining spirit in Acts 16, the false (but ineffective) prophet Balaam in the Book of Numbers, and the necromancer of Endor. (1Sam 28:7) More modern examples include the “Christian faith healers” of today, who promise to cure their listeners of physical ills, while utterly failing to address the spiritual condition of those who trust their words. Yahshua and His disciples did

often heal those whom they had just met, but ever was the statement made thereafter, “Go, and sin no more.” Without the victory message that comes with the Gospel, that men are truly cured of their sin-condition, (and this is the “good news” of *lasting* benefit) material comforts and considerations are of little profit.

For the believer, the balance between these two laws is best expressed in a single verse of the Bible that takes into account both natural and spiritual cause-and-effect concepts: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Gal 6:7)

Chapter 6.4 – The Principles of Bible Study

Originally, the principles involved in a thorough study of the Bible were to be contained in a book entitled *The Keys to The Kingdom*. While this would have given a more thorough treatment of the subject, with many detailed examples, it is enough at the moment to describe them in this baptismal guidebook to the degree that both prospective converts and established members of the CSDA Church can benefit.

The reader will note, as we list them out, that we have been using many of these principles already, as we have been seeing the development of the Church's doctrines. This is important, because the proper use of these principles allows true progress to be made in our understanding of the character and doctrines of the Creator, while at the same time we are kept from running off on tangents and ending up with errors or apostate beliefs.

6.4.1 – Critical Thinking

The first principle is perhaps one of the most important. The Christian must be involved in education, rather than mere indoctrination. It is true that persuading others to believe as we do is the “evangelistic” part of our faith, and it is a valid instruction we have been given from the Master. (Mark 11:15) At the same time, we should never seek to encourage blind faith, either faith in our words or in the record offered in the Bible. While some things do operate on trust, “For we walk by faith, not by sight,” (2Cor 5:7) we are shown enough of the character of Yah, and the benefits – the *practical* benefits – of following His instructions that it is not too wide a chasm to trust Him to fulfill the promises (or discipline for the transgressions) He has spoken that are not yet made manifest.

Critical thinking involves applying what is already known to unknown situations in order to obtain reasonable conclusions even if the answers are not immediately apparent. An example of applying this principle to doctrine is found above, while discussing the use of “clean” and “unclean” meats for food by Noah and his immediate descendants. We are not told explicitly, “Noah was able to eat unclean meats also, at that time,” which would have likely born great emphasis to Moses, who was thereafter to instruct the Israelites to avoid that very thing. We can see, however, that the word “all” in the Bible is often used as a representative set (often a specific set) in such places as Titus 1:15, “Unto the pure all things are pure.”

If this was true in an absolute sense, why would Paul instruct converts to avoid a great number of things? Fornication, adultery, idolatry, disrespect of the Church and secular authorities, and various other transgressions are not to be done by the one claiming to be a follower of Christ, and concerning those who would do this Paul himself directs the believers, “put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (1Cor 5:13)

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Paul does not make any “new” doctrine by saying, “all things are pure” for the believer; what he does there is reaffirm that there is no guilt associated with proper behavior, and that there is nothing to “fear” from false doctrines (*e.g.*, “Jewish fables, and commandments of men” – Titus 1:14) because these things cannot harm the one who is pure. Likewise with Noah, there was nothing wrong now with eating flesh meats, but other factors (such as the fact that certain animals were declared “unclean” and unsuitable for a number of things, and that these animals were very limited in population) necessitate a more thorough understanding of the teaching being presented.

Another example includes the entirely illogical objection to the observance of the seventh day Sabbath for the reason that “you cannot know the true seventh day of the week, since the calendar has changed. The word ‘Saturday’ does not even appear in the Bible.” It is true that the word “Saturday” is absent from the Biblical record, but does that mean we cannot know how to follow an instruction of Heaven?

We know that the Messiah was raised from the dead “early the first day of the week,” (Mark 16:9) and the historical documents and practices preserved by the Church from that day to this universally declare that this day was what is today called Sunday. Further, the modern Jews, who have always been scrupulous Sabbath-keepers, globally hold that the Sabbath day is observed from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. To say, “We cannot know which day is the true one” is to discount the consistent historical record, the universal testimony of every modern group that keeps the weekly Sabbath, and (worst of all) the integrity of the Almighty, who would not give an instruction to humanity that they could not possibly be expected to understand or obey.

While we are certainly to teach doctrine to all who come to us for instruction, we must be careful that we are educating, teaching those whom we are training to think clearly and properly, or else we have only taken men from the slavery of sin and made of them slaves to ignorance and arbitrary subservience. There is no true liberty in that.

6.4.2 – Common Concepts

One of the criticisms directed at the Bible from those who doubt its authenticity is that the Bible contradicts itself, or that it can be interpreted to justify a wide variety of divergent doctrines and practices. It is certainly true that the Scriptures *can* be used to justify any number of beliefs, (good or evil) but this does not mean that there isn’t a proper way to understand its teachings, or a valid set of uniform conclusions that may be drawn from its contents.

There are no true contradictions in the Bible, if three main ideas are taken into account, these being context, audience and wording. Often the setting of a statement, attended by particular circumstances, will lead to an

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instruction valid for *that* situation, but not a general teaching to be followed at all times. Again, at times one individual will be told to perform a certain act that is strictly forbidden to others. Lastly, the wording of the Bible can lead to misunderstandings if the reader is unfamiliar with its meaning, or the way it is being used in specific passages. The first two of these issues will be examined in this section, and the matter of wording, which is a broad one, will have a section of its own.

The underlying principle for all these things is that in order to obtain a right understanding of the Bible's teachings, we must seek "common concepts." The Bible contains enough information that the "average" reader can get a proper understanding of Yahweh's desires for his or her life. This does not, as we have all seen often enough, mean that errors cannot be made. It is for this very reason that the Almighty has established for His people a system of cooperation and mutual aid; these are two major functions of the Church Body, as we have examined in a previous chapter.

6.4.2.1 – Context

In order to find common concepts, we must be sure that they are truly "common." This involves careful study of the context of the Scriptures' statements. Some, for example, have taken the statement that "upon the first day of the week [...] the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7) as a statement affirming the sacredness of Sunday for the New Testament Church. Looking at the context of the statement, however, we find that this day was emphasized, not because of its place in the week, but because it involved a special and rare visit from Paul, who "preached unto them, [...] and continued his speech until midnight." (verse 7) Looking more generally at the context of worship in the early Church, we find that "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." (Acts 2:44, 46)

The above is a fairly obvious example, but there are others as well that involve very important doctrines. In Chapter 4.2 of *The Highway of Holiness Volume 1*, we studied the Biblical model of the Godhead. We examined one of the key verses of Trinitarians, which is found in one of John's Epistles: "For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." (1John 5:7) As we saw, however, the context of that verse absolutely eliminates its usefulness for presenting the Holy Ghost as a co-equal, co-eternal Being with the Father and Son, for the next verse reads: "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." (verse 8) The phrase "agree in" does not appear in the Greek of the passage, but was added (for some reason) by the translators. Thus, from the setting of the statements, we see that John is merely presenting

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parallel lists of “witnesses” to the Gospel, which may or may not be Persons unto themselves.

Another pair of passages that come under fire from skeptics are the supposedly contradictory accounts of the creation that are found in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. In the first chapter we read, “And Elohim created great whales, and every living creature that moveth which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind; and Elohim saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind;’ and it was so. And Elohim said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.’ And Elohim saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” (Gen 1:21, 24, 26, 31)

In the second chapter we read, “And out of the ground Yahweh Elohim formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.” (Gen 2:19)

In Genesis 1, it states that the creation of three things was in this order: the birds, then the land animals, and finally man. In Genesis 2, we read that this order is reversed; Adam (a man) is already there when Yahweh makes “every” beast of the field, and finally “every” fowl of the air, for the human to name them.

What the skeptics do not realize, however, is that Genesis 2 is not entirely a re-statement of the creation account of Genesis 1, but it is a continuous history. The birds were made, and then the land animals, and finally man. But the story does not end there; for Yahweh next created “a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.” (Gen 2:8) It is there, in the garden, that He created one of every kind of animal for Adam to name, for the garden itself was not populated by anything but “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.” (Gen 2:9)

This is another example, like the one we have seen above, in which words like “all” and “every” are taken incorrectly in an absolute sense. Here, as in other places, they refer only to all and every thing being discussed at that particular time: a representative set of the creation. Further, the context reveals that the animals were presented to Adam, not merely for the naming, but that he could see the pre-existing condition of every animal, that every one had a mate, “but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” (Gen 2:20)

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This second, specific creation of the animals in Adam's vision was a precursor to the creation of Eve, so that he could understand the suitability of the helper that Yahweh was providing for him. That is the context of Genesis 2, and is extremely important for obtaining a clear understanding of why two different statements of creation are apparently recorded.

6.4.2.2 – Audience

As mentioned, the audience of Yahweh's declarations are often key to understanding the principle being expressed. We are told, "Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness." (Lev 19:29) Further, "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel." (Deu 23:17a) Yet despite this uniformly negative portrayal of prostitution as a practice, we find that one of the holy men of Israel was instructed to marry one of this profession.

"And Yahweh said to Hosea, 'Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from Yahweh.' So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived and bare him a son." (Hos 1:2, 3) There was a symbolic purpose, clearly expressed, for Hosea's choice of a bride, but this is hardly a general principle to be followed. In fact, of the priests of Israel, who are pre-cursors for the members of the Christian Church, (1Pet 2:9) Moses was told, "They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband, for he is holy unto his God." (Lev 21:7)

Abraham was told, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen 22:2) Yet we are told, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto Yahweh; and because of these abominations Yahweh thy Almighty doth drive [the other nations] out from before thee." (Deu 18:10-12)

Now, secular scholars, who often have little understanding of the *message* of the Bible, (though they may specialize in Its language) often come to the conclusion that the "Jewish perception of God" has changed over time. He has gone, they say, from a pagan-like deity demanding unquestioned obedience and bloody sacrifices, to the more benevolent Creator of the major and minor prophets who could say, "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt." (Jer 8:21) It is certainly true that the perception of the Israelites changed over time, but this was because of changes in the nation, not the Almighty or the conditions of His covenant. Similarly, there are

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changes in our individual perceptions of Yahweh as we grow in grace and knowledge, but this is not because His requirements of humans have changed – certainly not from a time of ever demanding human sacrifices.

The subsequent events recorded in Genesis make it plain that Yahweh had no intention of allowing Abraham to actually sacrifice his son, having provided an alternative sacrifice that was present at the altar he erected. (Gen 22:13) It was important for Abraham’s specific experience, however, that he go through that ordeal in order to be equipped for the work to which he was being called, especially with that particular defects of character that he displayed during the course of his travels. (Gen 12:13, 20:2)

Finally, we read in John’s letters, “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:” (1John 4:2) It is *extremely* important to understand the audience to whom John is writing here, or we will arrive at the entirely nonsensical conclusion that any message, and any messenger, regardless of how out-of-phase they may be with the teachings of Scripture, is nevertheless “of God,” and to be respected, as long as they are able to state that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” Obviously, the very thing that makes cults and apostate sects so dangerous is the blending of truth and error that diminishes the ability of the seeker to distinguish them from the true teachers of the Gospel.

John’s letter was in regard to a specific error in his day, in which it was taught that Yahshua was only a spiritual “force,” an illusion that appeared to be a man, and appeared to suffer and die though He had no physical form. Those who believed this teaching could be distinguished from those of the apostolic tradition, because they did not believe that the Son had truly come in the flesh. To take this one criterion, however, and apply it to every error since that time is to invite all manner of heresy and inaccuracy.

6.4.3.3 – *The Preponderance of Evidence*

In seeking common concepts, the most effective way to ensure that we are reading the text properly is to seek out all passages in which the topic of our interest is mentioned, taking into account the aforementioned ideas of context and audience. Wording, which is discussed below, is also a consideration, but this often requires additional resources such as a concordance or Bible dictionary. For most purposes it is often enough to simply deal with whatever is presented in the Scriptures as-is, and there are only a few cases (though some *might* be important in an overall sense) in which the version of the Bible being used makes a significant impact in the understanding of the reader.

One of the “defenses” that nominal Christians have developed against being corrected by their brethren, which is an absolutely vital aspect of Yahweh’s method for our sanctification, is found in a reading of Matthew 7:1: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

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Thus, the worldly Churchling feels he or she is free to live like the backsliders and apostates; yet as long as they can say, “Praise the Lord,” and attend religious meetings on a semi-regular basis, they believe that they are beyond all criticism, despite what their testimony and example may be doing to their families, friends and acquaintances. This is *not* what Yahshua meant when He said, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mark 8:34) This is not what Paul had on his conscience when he said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” (1Cor 11:1)

Is it true that Church members are restricted or discouraged from sharing concerns or even reprimands with others? Certainly not... and Matthew 7:1 is no shield against the loving concern of our neighbors. Here context might almost be enough. We need only read the entire passage from verse 1 to verse 5 to see that the complete teaching is: Do not be hasty in judgment; first make sure that your own eyes are clear, “and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” (verse 5)

The argument is made sure, however, when we look for similar statements elsewhere that deal with Christians correcting one another. Paul says, “if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (1Cor 5:11-13)

The emphasis there is on the distinction between those who are “without” and those who are “within.” The passage is speaking about Christians who are judging those outside the Church so harshly that they are finding it difficult even to evangelize them. But the Christian is not to fear or despise those outside the Body of Christ who do evil... for had Yahshua possessed the minutest portion of this spirit, how could He have come down from Heaven to die for the sons of Adam? At the same time, it is our responsibility to keep the Body pure by exercising Gospel Order, by disciplining its members, by warning those who err. In fact, “Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2Tim 4:2)

Discipline has become a dirty word in this age. Reproof and rebuke are unwelcome guests at the table of the proud and self-sufficient, but the Kingdom of Heaven is not composed of citizens such as this. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?” (1Cor 6:2-5) The least in the Church, the Word tells us,

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should be able to “judge” (decide between good and evil) among the brethren.

“But when Peter was come to Antioch,” Paul recalls, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, ‘If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?’” (Gal 2:11-14)

Imagine what Church history would have been like if pride had arisen in Peter, and he had said, “Who are you, Paul, to judge me? I have been a believer longer than you!” Much of Yahshua’s ministry involved correcting the beliefs and practices of those around Him. The sincere humbled themselves, and learned; the proud resisted, and departed unhappy. The attitude of some is that unless Christ Himself were to appear and warn them of their error, they would not repent. But what the Messiah says is this: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Mat 25:40) Those who despise the messengers because the message is unpleasant to their souls turn away from the very means that Christ has provided for them to learn humility and righteousness.

Another example of the importance of seeking other passages to confirm the understanding offered in one place is the state of the dead. This is a topic covered in some detail in Volume 1, therefore we will only briefly point out here that if places such as Luke 16 and 1Samuel 28 (the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and the incident with Samuel’s “ghost” respectively) are taken as if written in a vacuum, error is sure to follow. If the many passages that describe how to identify a parable are disregarded, and that tell us in doctrinal discourse the condition of those who have died until the resurrection, misunderstandings are certain. If we discount the Chronicles’ statement that Saul had experienced a meeting with a “familiar spirit,” and not the disembodied essence of the departed prophet, how can we be free of error?

Seeking the preponderance of evidence is a legitimate application of the “Two Witnesses” principle that has appeared numerous times in this guidebook. Finding multiple witnesses to the proper understanding of a doctrine allows for use of the *even if* argument in support of a particular understanding.

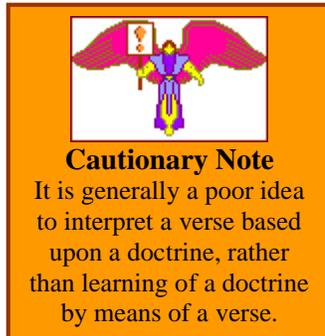
In other words, when discussing Scriptural teachings, those who believe a certain thing will attempt to explain away the verses used by those with an

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alternative belief. If prayerfully and carefully done, this is a valid and useful way of persuading people to change their views to come nearer into line with the Gospel. If, however, the doctrine one accepts is “solid,” and has multiple passages that attest it, even if some of the verses are explained away, others will remain. “*Even if,*” it goes, “Verses A and B are questionable, or do not lend the strongest support to my position, there are still verses C, D, E and F that indicate my view is the right one. Let’s look at those and see if we can understand A and B in light of what they are saying.”

Teaching the Victory message offers a ready example of this idea. One of the clearest verses that tell us of the true beauty and power of Christ’s sacrifice is found in John’s first letter: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (1John 3:9) The context of this makes it perfectly clear that John means what he is saying, for the verses above and below it only strengthen this idea: “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, (or “made visible”) and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” (verses 8 and 10)

“But,” some protest, “the phrase ‘doth not commit’ can mean ‘does not continue to commit’ sin, therefore you should not be teaching that the born-again *never* knowingly act in sinful ways.” There is an overall weakness to this argument, because not “continuing” in sin means basically the same thing as ceasing from it; the doubtful only insist on it because it seems to give them some time to continue to be worldly. Ignoring this for the moment, *even if* 1 John 3:9 does not present the strongest argument in favor of a complete victory over sin, we find many other verses that provide precisely that idea.



The same author writes, “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” (1John 5:18) The phrase “sinneth not” is translated from different Greek words, and cannot be translated as “continue not in sin.” It is precisely “sinneth not,” and makes no allowances for time or periodic relapses. But again, *even if* we discount all of John’s words, Paul asks, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom 6:2) Isaiah says, “Cease to do evil; learn to do well.” (Isa 1:16, 17) Peter tells us, “Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind [that was in Christ], for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” (1Pet 4:1) Jude points out that Yahweh “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you

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faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,” (Jude 1:24) and we know that He is not only *able*, but has also pledged Himself, to do just that. “But the Lord is faithful (*i.e.*, trustworthy, reliable) who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” (2Th 3:3)

Another example comes up often when discussing the matter of clean and unclean meats for Christians. Yahshua taught that “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (Mat 15:11) Those who believe that there is no longer any such thing as an “unclean meat” bring this up in defense of their position, while those who believe that the division in animals both pre-dated Moses and post-date the cross point out that the issue being discussed was ritual hand-washing. (Mat 15:2) Further, they say, even years after this teaching, Peter declared, “I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.” (Acts 10:14)

Those who say the unclean animals are now suitable for food might then say, “Peter may simply not have understood Christ’s instructions... after all, Paul had to correct him in Antioch about eating with Gentiles.” “Yes,” comes the possible response, “but the vision in Acts 10 was to reveal to him that he was not to treat humans as he treated the unclean animals. This was the lesson he did not learn, which led to the Antioch incident. If there was no such thing as an ‘unclean’ animal any longer, what force would that object lesson have held?”

And so it might go, back and forth with the arguments, unless a verse or passage outside of the Gospels or Acts can be brought to bear on the case and settle the matter. Two very good verses may be presented to verify the position that unclean animals are still unclean. The first, which we have seen already, shows that as early as Genesis 7 Yahweh had already made a distinction between these kinds of creatures. An animal being “unclean” had nothing to do with the Mosaic Law, but with the nature of the creature itself. Yahshua’s cross did not make any fundamental change to the laws of nature or digestion that we have on any kind of authority.

It is true, as Paul teaches, that “nothing is unclean of itself,” (Rom 14:14) but this statement is about an entirely different issue, which is that those who were “weak in faith,” (Rom 14:2) believed that it was a sin to partake of meat that was offered to idols, for it had thereby become “unclean.” (Acts 15:29) In an extended passage dealing with this issue, (1Cor 7:4-13) Paul makes it clear that offering food to an idol does nothing to make it “unclean,” but the advice in Acts 15:29 is still good to follow for the sake of onlookers. Nothing in Romans 14 or any other passage even begins to deal with the matter of unclean animals being used for food; the Judaizers alone would have made that a memorable discussion!

Another passage is found in the books of the prophets. Isaiah has a vision of the very last days, right before judgment and well after the Golgotha, and

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he reports, ““They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together,’ saith Yahweh.” (Isa 66:17) Let the reader not be confused by the words “sanctify” and “purify.” These words are being used ironically to indicate the false-holiness of the ones being mentioned, for it says in verse 5 that “Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, ‘Let Yahweh be glorified;’ but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.”

These ones being mentioned in Isaiah 66 believe they are doing Yahweh’s work, casting dissenters out of the Church “for my name’s sake,” and practicing all manner of filthiness in the very mistaken belief that they are being made more holy, more “sanctified.” One of the activities in which these proud individuals participate is the consumption of all kinds of foods that they believe are now “pure,” but in fact remain “abomination” in the eyes of Heaven, even in earth’s final hours. *Even if*, therefore, Peter’s statements in Acts are the result of some misunderstanding of the Gospel that he continued to hold, we have the testimony of both Moses and Isaiah that the division Elohim Himself made between the animals held true at the very beginning, and holds true right up until the close of this age.

6.4.3 – Wording

Wording is a matter intimately connected to the idea of seeking common concepts. If the wording of Scripture is not understood, how can we know what is or is not a common theme? The importance of this idea results in a section of its own, as it has its own subsets.

6.4.3.1 – Original Languages

In a sense, those who read the Bible in these days are at a disadvantage, for they were not the audience that the human scribes of Yahweh’s words had in mind. According to the belief of every writer, “the day of Yahweh is at hand,” (Isa 13:6) and there is immediacy and urgency about the work that does not look thousands of years down in time. This is as Yahweh designed it, for the people of *that* age needed to learn from the words of the messenger at that very moment. At the same time, Yahweh has preserved for His people a complete record of His dealings with mankind. Knowing how long time should last for this present age, and what the needs of His Church would be in every generation, He ensured that the things necessary to our understanding should be kept, and enough explanatory material provided that none need err, even if individual passages might appear problematic.

It is a misunderstanding of this concept, that the Bible was written for both its authors’ times and ours, that leads some to view its statements as contradictory, incomplete or confusing. Yahweh will work with people,

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through people, in order to present Himself to mankind. Yet despite these necessary limitations, those who seek Him are promised that they will find that which they desire. (Deu 4:29, Mat 7:7)

It is occasionally the case that the original language of a verse or passage will contain a connotation or secondary meaning that is necessary for a proper understanding of the text. Although the English translations are not “bad,” they are nevertheless in a language that developed in a different time, and among different peoples. There are several examples in which even a basic knowledge of the original language helps to communicate the proper thoughts of the author.

We read, for example, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from Yahweh, which made heaven and earth.” (Psa 121:1, 2)

The passage seems to be saying that the speaker’s help is coming from the hills, and then is coming from Yahweh. Some might say, “Not a problem, Yahweh is simply being envisioned as standing upon a hill.” The passage appears to be a difficult one to translate, because various versions give different translations of the exact wording, but the potential difficulty comes from the fact that the “hills” are often seen, in the time of Israel’s kings and prophets, as places of idolatry and impurity. (2Ki 17:10, Jer 13:27) The hills were the places upon which the various fertility cults that plagued the land would establish their altars and sacred groves.

Understanding the original language reveals that there is little distinction in Hebrew between a statement and a question; this is one of the reasons why some Christian groups, who do not accept the idea of the archangel Michael as a pre-incarnate representation of Christ alter the translation of His name. The name “Michael” means, “Who is like God.” This is subtly changed to read, “Who is like God?” a challenge, rather than a declaration. Those who do this rightly conclude that it is improper for a mere angel, regardless of how highly exalted, to have a name that connotes such a close association with the Person of the Creator. The improperly conclude that Michael, who is able to intercede for humanity, who acts like the Yahweh-angel of Zechariah 3 and Jude 9, who vanishes from the Biblical record at the birth of Yahshua, *cannot* have this significant name, because He is not one with Elohim.

In Psalm 121, understanding this yields the more uniform translation: “Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from Yahweh, which made heaven and earth.” (Psa 121:1, 2) This appears to be more in line with what the Psalmist says in other places: “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. Our soul waiteth for Yahweh; He is our help and our shield.” (Psa 33:16, 20) “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and

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in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Yahweh!” (Isa 31:1) “Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Ba’alzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of His word?” (2Kings 1:16)

Another example is found in the New Testament, in which we have John saying, in apparent contradiction to the Gospel’s Victory message: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1John 2:1) John seems to be saying, “I am writing to you so that you don’t sin... but if you do, we have an Advocate anyway.” There are two ways in which understanding a little Greek grammar helps to understand this. First, in English the words “and” and “but” can be interchanged in some cases. I can say, “I went to the store to buy milk, but the store was out of milk.” If I say, “I went to the store to buy milk, *and* the store was out of milk,” the same meaning is conveyed.

In Greek, however, the word John uses for “and” is entirely different from the word that means “but.” In fact, this word is used to append things to a list or to strengthen a declaration already made. It is like, “and furthermore.” John is therefore saying, “I write these things to you so that you do not sin, and furthermore, if you do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” But this doesn’t seem complete either, because it appears that John is even more uncertain than before.

The second aspect of grammar comes in here, when you realize that the tense from which “do sin” is translated into English is not a simple present tense. The word used to describe this tense is *aorist*, and is described thus in *Strong’s Concordance*:

“The aorist tense is characterized by its emphasis on punctiliar action; that is, the concept of the verb is considered without regard for past, present, or future time. There is no direct or clear English equivalent for this tense, though it is generally rendered as a simple *past tense* in most translations.

“The events described by the aorist tense are classified into a number of categories by grammarians. The most common of these include a view of the action as having begun from a certain point (‘inceptive aorist’), or having ended at a certain point (‘cumulative aorist’), or merely existing at a certain point (‘punctiliar aorist’). The categorization of other cases can be found in Greek reference grammars.

“The English reader need not concern himself with most of these finer points concerning the aorist tense, since in most cases they cannot be rendered accurately in English translation, being fine points of Greek exegesis only. The common practice of rendering an

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aorist by a simple English *past tense* should suffice in most cases.”
[*Strong’s Concordance*, 5777 Tense – Aorist, emphasis added]

I have added emphasis to the phrase “past tense” twice, to show that the standard way to translate words of this type is in the past tense; and further, that the word generally has a connotation of a definite point in time, rather than any ongoing or current action. In this case, therefore, since John is not speaking of those who have heard the Gospel *beginning* to sin at a particular point, it is clear that he is speaking of the sin as having existed at some point previous, but is not an ongoing phenomenon in the life of the believer.

This would render the meaning of the verse much more accurately as: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And furthermore, if any man has sinned, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” This might seem like a very subtle change, but for those who love their sin so much as to argue with the idea that Christ has set us free from that gruesome imprisonment, any small hook is quite enough for them if they wish to hang an argument. John is reaching out to those who have been deceived, and is calling them back to the Body of Yahshua, saying, “The past is the past, and Christ will forgive you for all such things.” No allowances are made here for ongoing sin in the lives of genuine, committed, undeceived, born-again believers, and John of all the apostles is most eloquent to that effect.

6.4.3.2 – Use of a Concordance

A little may be said here about the use of external references for help in Bible study. As demonstrated above, a concordance is often useful in arriving at the finer points of doctrine. It is not necessary to trust any single translation, but it is often useful to compare different versions of the Bible with each other, and to have a list of the words and their common uses at hand for further study.

Concordances, however, are not perfect either, and can only draw the meanings of the words from their apparent usage. For example, we find that *Strong’s* (which is mentioned and used to good effect above) has this as the entry for the word *Behemoth*: “a water-ox, i.e. the hippopotamus or Nile-horse.” Later concordances, however, have realized that this simply does not match the description provided by the passage, (Figure 6.3) and have concluded instead that it is possibly some form of an “extinct dinosaur.” Biblical fundamentalist groups, such as the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church, believe this to be the true meaning, and supportive of the view that all living creatures were formed at approximately the same time, according to the account given in Genesis.

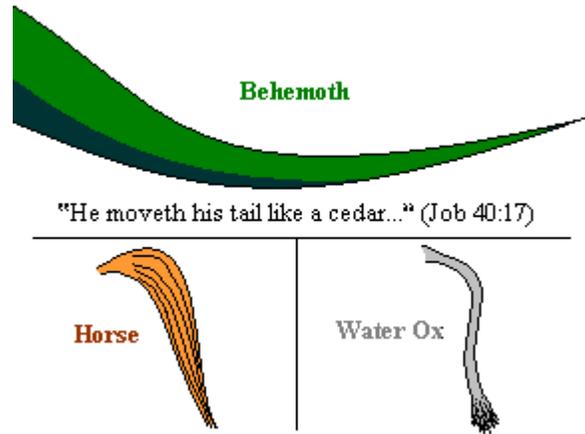


Figure 6.3 – The Tail of Behemoth

The best policy at every step is to ask, “Is this consistent with the picture of Yahweh as derived from the Scriptures as a whole? What does this word or passage teach me in relation to the other words or passages I have studied?” When study is performed in this manner, there is a much smaller likelihood of running into problems.

6.4.3.3 – Translators’ Notes

One of the things that must be carefully handles is the use of translators’ notes in the Scriptures. There are cases in which punctuation marks, or even entire words, are added into the text in an effort to make the passage more readable. Most of the time, this is a positive change, or at least does no harm. At other times, however, it can wreak havoc on doctrine.

We find, for example, two passages already discussed in Volume 1 about the state of the dead, these being the incident with the thief on the cross, and the incident between Saul and the woman of Endor. In the first the translators add a comma to the words of Yahshua, who instead of saying, “Verily I say unto thee today: thou shalt be with me in Paradise,” now says, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43) This latter is an impossible reading of the verse, since Yahshua had not ascended to Paradise (equated with the dwelling-place of Yahweh in other passages like 2Cor 12:1-4 and Rev 2:7) even three days later.

In Saul’s case, the Chronicler’s record of the events originally said, “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking of a familiar spirit, to enquire.” (1Ch 10:13) In our translations today, we are misinformed, “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of *one that had* a familiar spirit, to enquire of it,” (additional words italicized). This latter reading lends credence to the preposterous idea that an infidel sorceress was able to raise the consciousness of one of Yahweh’s dead prophets, when He had already

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made it plain that He would not allow any such communication to take place. (1Sam 28:6)

A third example of this is found in Colossians, and again we are using a familiar example from the first volume. As we read in Section 3.1 of *The Highway of Holiness*, Colossians 2:17 has had several words added to it by the translators, one of which in particular entirely changing its meaning. We read, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days], which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body [is] of Christ.” (Col 2:16, 17) The words in [brackets] are added.

If left in, the passage seems to be saying, “Don’t worry about Sabbaths, New Moons, Holy days or what you eat or drink; these things are only a shadow of what is to come, but Christ is the truth of it all.” There are several things wrong with this interpretation, which appears in several Bible versions, and worded in various ways. First, the Messiah Himself is one of those things that “are [...] to come,” and when He does we will find that the Sabbaths and New Moons will be re-affirmed rather than repudiated. (Isa 66:23) Second, a ritual or practice that is a foreshadowing of coming events is a Biblical reason to *keep* it, not to avoid it.

At the end of the Last Supper with His disciples, “[Yahshua] took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’” (Mat 27-30) For the very reason that the true celebration of the “marriage supper” of the Lamb (Rev 19:7) was yet to come, and the last supper was a shadow of this blessed event, the disciples were instructed, “this do in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19)

If the translator’s notes are removed, therefore, Paul is actually saying, “Do not let any man influence you in the keeping of these sacred things, which are a shadow of things to come, except for the Body of Christ.” Now we have a statement that is entirely consistent with the context of Colossians 2, the Bible’s teachings about the foreshadowing rituals, Paul’s general and oft-stated support for the Hebrew practices in the New Testament Church, Yahshua’s own example, the prophecies of Old Testament prophets, the history of the Christian Church until at least 300 A.D., and the manner in which Paul speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ and fully able to evaluate the conduct of Its members.

6.4.4 – Opposites Encompass

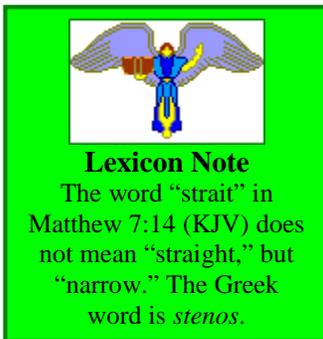
A simple, but powerful, device used by the authors of the Scriptures is the employment of opposite extremes to indicate perfection or totality. For example, we read that, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He

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removed our transgressions from us.” (Psa 103:12) It is possible, of course, to continue going east endlessly, and the same holds true for west. This verse thus dramatically indicates that there is an utter impossibility for our forsaken sins to return and have power over us.

We read, again of Yahweh’s instructions to His people, “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deu 11:18, 19) This brings up images of Yahweh’s law being repeated and taught in times of rest and times of activity, in the mornings and at night, when waking up and when lying down to sleep. Essentially, speak of Yahweh’s ways at all times.

A third example is a very common one when discussing Biblical doctrine, to the extent that this guidebook has already made use of its imagery several times. We find, “Ye shall observe to do therefore as Yahweh your Elohim hath commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” (Deu 5:32) “Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;” (Josh 23:6) This phrasing, appearing primarily in the earlier books of the Bible, provides a word picture that is used by much later writers.



We find, for instance, Isaiah describing “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of Yahweh, make straight in the desert a highway for our Almighty One.’” (Isa 40:3) In other words, “Make a plain path, with no errors that would cause my people to stumble in the way on either side.” Isaiah employs this image in the verse from which this guidebook takes its name: “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called ‘The Way of Holiness.’ The unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” (Isa 35:8) Because the way is “straight,” even those wanderers who are “fools,” (and this word has connotations of those who do not even wish to learn,” have no occasion or excuse to make a mistake. When Yahshua said the Way was “narrow,” (Mat 7:14) this also brings to mind a think path to which one must strictly adhere.

6.4.5 – First Use

The principle of “first use” is an effective way to ensure that the definitions of the Bible’s words we employ are accurate. This is particularly important when dealing with older translations that often contain words that are no

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longer standard in our language. Essentially, the first time a word appears should give us a starting-point for its contextual meaning. *Contextual* meaning must be specified, of course, because the same word may mean different things in different settings.

Of the beginning of the creation we read, “And Elohim called the light *Day*, and the darkness He called *Night*. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Gen 1:5) Now, this is a contentious verse in the Christian world! The secular world simply disbelieves this, but even in a religious setting, the idea of what constitutes a “day” in Genesis is the source of much disputing.

Using the principle of first use suggests that the simplest answer is the best. While “day” can have many meanings, in both Hebrew and English, it is obvious that it is being used here in two of those senses: to indicate the 24-hour period of time during which the earth rotates completely, (*i.e.*, “the first day”) and specifically the part of that time period that has our location on the earth exposed to sunlight (*i.e.*, “called the light Day”). “Day” can also mean a time, an age, and even (in prophecy) a year – but these are all indicated by the immediate context. In places where it simply says “day,” without a prophetic or metaphorical setting, the words “day” and “night” should be used in their most basic meaning: the 24-hour period of time, or the light and dark periods thereof respectively. When it says, then, that “in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day,” (Exo 20:11) it means exactly what it seems to be reporting.

Looking at the “first use” principle yields some interesting results. Although not strong enough on their own on which to build doctrine (although doctrines may be built on most of these from other verses) we find: “And Elohim said, ‘Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.’” (Gen 1:29) Understanding this principle, we find that it is not even necessary to do a detailed language study to realize that the word “meat” in the Bible is often a general term for “food.” Passages such as that in Acts 27, therefore, lose their ability to be confusing to readers: “Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when [Paul] had thus spoken, he took bread [not “meat”], and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat.” (Acts 27:34, 35)

The first use of the word “wine” in Gen 9:2 is in describing Noah’s drunkenness and Ham’s subsequent sin.

The first thing ever described as being “sanctified,” or “made holy,” was the seventh day Sabbath. (Gen 2:3)

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The first appearance of the word “forgive” was a request made to Joseph (a type of Christ) who was betrayed by his brothers. (Gen 50:17)

The first time the word “sacrifice” is used of an offering to Yahweh (Gen 31:54) reconciliation is being made between the formerly hostile Jacob and Laban.

6.4.6 – Expanded Meanings

“Thou shalt not kill” (Exo 20:13) is the sixth commandment. What we find, as we continue reading through the Bible, is that this meaning is expanded to include not only the physical act, but the state of mind that lends itself to murder also. Yahshua taught, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, ‘Thou fool,’ shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Mat 5:21, 22) John adds, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” (1John 3:15)

We are told to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, (Exo 20:8) and other verses make it plain that keeping it holy involves refraining from conducting business, (Neh 10:31) and doing secular work (Exo 20:10) on the seventh day of the week. It is a day dedicated to the relationship between Yahweh and man, and a necessary blessing for our spiritual growth. On the other hand, the New Testament Book of Hebrews expands it greatly, saying to those already keeping the literal day, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” (Heb 4:9) This “rest” is the state of spiritual quietness that is found by faith in Yahshua, in which a man no longer seeks to justify himself by his works, “for he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.” (verse 10) “Unbelief” it is further stated, keeps a man from being a Sabbath-keeper, even if he outwardly observes all the Law. (verse 6)

Expanded meanings do not only apply to the Ten Commandments, although these provide us with ready examples. Yahshua informed His hearers that our neighbors include not only those of our immediate living area, or even those of our nation, but anyone, of any race or culture, with whom we share this world. (Luke 10:29-37)

The Presence of Yahweh, rather than being restricted to the fiery cloud of the Shekinah, or some other manifestation that may be detected with the natural senses, (Num 20:6, Gen 3:8) is also present in the character of the Savior, (John 14:8-11) and in the persons of His saints. (1Cor 3:16)

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6.4.7 – Limited Meanings

As a balance to the principle of expanding the meaning of a teaching to new circumstances and settings, the student must bear in mind that some concepts cannot be expanded into certain areas without losing the integrity of the teaching. Understanding that some meanings are limited to specific contexts will prevent a lot of wild speculation and the potential for great errors.

One example of a limited meaning is the use of the word “fall” in poetic language. We read, for example, in the books of the prophets: “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, Yahweh shall be a light unto me.” (Mic 7:8) In the Proverbs we are told, “Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place, for a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Pro 24:15, 16)

Some have said, “This means that we can sin repeatedly, but as long as we continue to repent, we will be fine.” Some even apply the principle of Biblical numerology (see the relevant section below) to opine, “It says that a man may fall *seven times*, and still rise again, so we have infinite chances to repent, as long as we’re really, *really* sorry.”

The statements above are not incorrect in concept, but they are unrealistic in practice. First of all, and the most clearly wrong thing about the above interpretation is the context itself. In Micah and in Proverbs, the “falling” is not into sin; the Scriptures never speak about the righteous falling into known sins. These passages are speaking about falling into misfortune, or at the hand of an enemy. The prophet Micah is not indicating himself, but when he speaks it is with wording that would be used by a female speaker. The passage reveals that Israel is the speaker, symbolically expressing faith that she will be restored, despite the conflicts she is experiencing.

The author of Proverbs is not a statement about redemption, but is a warning to the wicked that righteous men may suffer calamity if their enemies are stirred up against them, but will never be kept in a state of need. Most importantly, the Scriptures themselves limit this use of the word “fall” to material (rather than spiritual) upsets. We have read several times the verse: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His Seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (1John 3:9)

If this verse is taken as doctrine, which it should, (see Section 6.4.8) it limits the use of “fall” as it appears the passages quoted above. Sometimes “fall” can have a variety of meanings, but if the Bible tells us outright that those who are born again will not fall into deliberate sin, we can be certain that an interpretation including that use of fall is in error.

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The first section of the first volume of this guidebook deals intensively with the character of Yahweh. As mentioned, the concept of the statements that apply “fall” to sinning are not entirely wrong; Yahweh would forgive, and infinitely. The problem is the assumption that a human being can be “really, *really* sorry” for a sin on a continuous basis. The problem is the assumption that those who teach the victory message have a God who is not always willing to forgive, as if the sin committed alters His love for the transgressing human.

These assumptions are erroneous; a human being that deliberately sins is described as “hardening” his heart, until all that is left is a stone. (Exo 8:15, Psa 95:8, Rom 2:5) A hardened heart is a stubborn heart, a rebellious heart; and those who have made themselves thus are simply unwilling to genuinely seek repentance, for they are no longer sensitive to the divine principles of love, mercy and forgiveness. It is not Yahweh who will not forgive, but the human who will neither request nor receive it if offered. Sin is fearful, not because it cannot be conquered by love, but because it causes one to seek darkness rather than light, and rebellion rather than the very thing that would cure the fatal condition.

Other examples of limited meanings include the use of the words “all,” and “every,” as we have already seen. We are told: “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.” (Acts 2:5) Do we conclude, based upon this verse, that there were Jews present at that feast who were living in the North, South and Central American continents? There are not many people who hold this belief, and with good reason – such regions, though already inhabited by human beings, were not yet known to the population of the Palestinian lands. Clearly the viewpoint of the author provides us with a limited (but do not confuse this term with *incorrect*, it conveyed precisely what the writer intended it to) meaning of the word “every.”

6.4.8 – The Descending Hierarchy of Exegesis

One of the “key” keys to Bible study is the descending order of authority that must be placed on certain parts of the Scriptures. This may seem extremely strange, at first glance, to speak of greater authority in some of the written Word, so it needs to be carefully explained.

We do not, for example, believe that trees can speak to each other, yet the Bible tells us that “The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, ‘Reign thou over us.’” (Judges 9:8) We do not believe, as some groups do, that the unleavened bread in the Last Supper literally *became* the flesh of the Savior, although He said of it, “This is my body.” We do not believe that an actual ten-horned beast will roam the world in the last days, although John saw one coming up out of the sea. (Rev 13:1)

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Does this mean we disbelieve or doubt the words of the Scriptures? Not at all, but we understand that some things are intended for our instruction and for doctrinal development, while others are designed to lead men gently to an understanding of a new and significant concept. There is an order to how dramatically certain parts of the Scriptures will have a direct effect upon our beliefs and practices, although we certainly believe that everything recorded in the Bible is true.

The order is as follows:

- 1) A **command** or an **instruction**: This is a clear expression of the will of Yahweh toward His people. Commands and instructions involve statements such as, “Thou shalt not steal.” (Exo 20:15) Statements such as this, with no indication in the text of any modifying factor, should have a direct and meaningful effect on our practices and beliefs about the subject that is addressed.
- 2) A **discourse**: If a prophet, apostle or scribe of the Scriptures is writing about some subject, and there are no indications that metaphors or poetic language are being used, the statement is taken as being authoritative. Unless there is a command (see #1) to disbelieve the speaker or to refrain from following the statement’s directive, information revealed in a discourse are to be made the basis for doctrine. For example, we are told in a discourse, “the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.” (Ecc 9:5) There is no command or instruction to disregard this statement, and there are no indications that poetic language is being employed, so it is accepted.
- 3) A **prophecy**: If a statement is made regarding things in the past, or things in the future, of which a prophet was not a direct witness, yet it is plain that this is Yahweh speaking through the individual, it is considered accurate and true. If there are no commands against believing the statement, and there is no doctrinal teaching that would cause a close examination of the information presented, the prophecy is accepted as valid. Daniel tells us, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Dan 7:13, 14) This is later confirmed by a discourse from Yahshua in Matthew 24:30.
- 4) A **parable** or **symbolic** statement: We have already seen an example of a clearly symbolic statement in Judges in which the trees are

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seeking to anoint for themselves a king. Some parables contain information that are certainly true, and are used to express a point, for example, “he took up his parable, and said, ‘Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, ‘Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.’” (Num 23:7) There are no instructions, doctrines or prophetic statements that would lead us to modify our understanding of this statement. There are others, however, such as the famous incident in Luke 16, in which Yahshua speaks of a man suffering eternal torment in “hell,” although the word He uses for “hell” is *Hades*, not *Gehenna* (the place of fiery punishment). In this case, the parabolic statement is to be understood as a conceptual rather than actual teaching, since previous discourses in Ecclesiastes, Isaiah and other places tell us that there is no knowledge in the grave. Yahshua Himself spoke of death as a “sleep,” (John 11:11) not an experience of either reward or punishment. This specific instance is covered in detail in Vol. 1.

- 5) A **precedent** is a practice that has attested use in the Scriptures, and *may* be useful for our education and growth. Some Bible teachers call it an “approved example”. There is no instruction or doctrinal teaching, for example, that tells exactly how to ordain an elder. What we do find, however, is a strong precedent from the writings of the apostles. Paul, for example, tells Timothy, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” (1Tim 4:14) There is no indication that this was done in every case, yet it is clear that this was the standard practice, for Timothy is also cautioned, “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins; keep thyself pure.” (1Tim 5:22) In the absence of any indication that this practice is not to be continued in the modern Church, this has remained the standard way of ordaining elders – by the laying-on of hands and by a consecrating prayer. Care must be taken, however, because there are recorded actions that go unpunished at the time, but are not proper for a Christian’s normal practice. King David, for example, had a history of deceiving people to accomplish his goals; but the instruction (#1) to Yahweh’s people is, “Lie not one to another,” (Col 3:9a) and the prophecies (#3) tell us of the last generation: “in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Rev 14:5)
- 6) An **inference** is a doctrine or belief that is the result of information drawn from a Bible study and related sources. There may not be any instruction, discourse or precedent, but from the statements that are made, a strong case may be made for the validity of the conclusion. “Prayer meetings,” for example, are not commanded in the Scriptures, and there are no real precedents given for regular meetings of this type (although we do find some called for particular reasons). Even so, from the many verses that encourage believers to

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pray constantly, (1Tim 2:8, 1Th 5:17) and from the many verses that encourage and demonstrate the assembly of believers together, (Heb 10:25, Acts 2:26) it is an obvious conclusion to draw that prayer was a regular community activity in the early Church.

- 7) A **guess** is, understandably, the least binding of all the statements that may be made about the Bible. A guess that is based on at least some information may be considered an inference (#6) but it is still not strong enough to constitute a *teaching*. Neither this, nor most inferences should be used as tests of fellowship or orthodoxy.

6.4.9 – Increasing Light

In general, later revelation supplants earlier information. This principle is expressed in the Bible, as we are told that, “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Pro 4:18) Additionally we are told, “Yahweh is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will magnify the Law, and make it honourable.” (Isa 42:21) This is in reference to Yahshua’s mission, in which He presented humanity with a clearer view of the expectations and character of the Father than the world had ever seen.

During His mission, near the end, the Savior revealed to His followers that they were expected to go beyond what He had taught them by commandment and discussion, saying, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” (John 15:15) Even after His death and resurrection this spiritual education was to continue, “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” (John 16:13; Luke 12:11, 12)

We find a number of examples in which Yahshua expanded the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures, such as: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery;’ but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” (Mat 5:27, 28) John continues this trend in speaking of murder, in a verse we have seen before, and another familiar example is found in the Book of Hebrews where the spiritual aspects of the Sabbath are described.

There are, of course, cautions to be mentioned. Even when Increasing Light is employed, the descending hierarchy of Biblical authority outlined above continues to apply. In other words, a precedent that appears to be approved

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in the New Testament does not invalidate a command from the Old. A *command* in the New Testament may render Old Testament practices obsolete, of course – *e.g.*, Christians are instructed to keep the Lord’s Supper as their “sacrifice,” (1Cor 5:7, 8) instead of offering the blood of lambs and goats – but an explanation of why the earlier practice is obsolete must at the very least be implied by the text. The Sabbath commandment is one example of this; there is no instruction or teaching in any of the New Testament books that gives the least impression that this blessing has been set aside. Some Sunday-keeping traditions attempt to imply, or even guess, that the Christians no longer kept the Sabbath after Pentecost but, *even if* (remember this idea from an earlier section?) we ignore all the positive evidence from Scripture and history against that position, we still find ourselves lacking a commandment or even a doctrine setting this longest article of the Decalogue aside.

A parable in the New Testament should not supercede a doctrine or there will be severe problems, as we have seen while discussing Luke 16 and the state of the dead. An inference from New Testament texts should not be used to set aside an earlier prophecy, a guess should not be used to supplant an earlier inference, and so on.

Another factor to keep in mind: as discussed earlier in the *Highway of Holiness*, Creation Seventh Day Adventists differ from the mainstream Adventist church in that the acceptance of the Trinity doctrine (among other things) is seen as a great error. It is often the case that Adventist theologians will acknowledge that early adherents of our doctrines were non- or even anti-Trinity in their beliefs and teachings. “But,” they say, “when new light came on the subject, the group accepted it by-and-large.”

This is not, however, the way the increasing light concept works! Of course, errors may be made. Even the Biblical prophets reversed themselves on occasion, after learning some new thing. (2Sam 7:1-17) What we must reject, however, is the idea that Yahweh would lead His people *away* from a doctrine, only to return them to it later on. We are told that the light increases continuously, and that believers are changed, both individually and as a community,

“into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2Cor 3:18) This Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, was sent to lead the Church into “*all* truth.” (John 16:13) When errors are made, it is not an accident or oversight on the part of the Spirit, but because of apostasy in the ranks. The Almighty said through His Messenger, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mat 18:18)



Emphasis Note

Error is not a sign of apostasy; repeated, dramatic errors, however, may be an indication of a spiritual problem.

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In order to accept the Trinitarian position as correct from an Adventist viewpoint, the belief must be adopted that despite all the increasing light of the 1800s regarding prophecy, lifestyle, sanctification, justification, obedience to the commandments, the health laws, the sanctuary in Heaven, and the living spirit of prophecy, despite all these dramatic and often novel changes, Yahweh would neglect or refuse to inform His people that the rest of the Christian world was correct in their view of the Godhead, while these, His own people, were wrong. Even worse, He would fail to correct them when they spoke out, vehemently at times, against the Trinity paradigm, even though loving rebukes were sent from one to another of even these experienced ministers at times to correct them in matters that were, in comparison, rather minor. This is not something a consistent Adventist Christian can accept.

Of course, the above argument only has force among those who have already accepted the Church's historical view on several of other matters, including the validity of Ellen White's ministry. The earlier sections of this guidebook, however, reveal the underlying and foundational reason for neglecting to accept the Trinity paradigm, and it is the same reason that led those early Adventist pioneers to reject it: because increasing light has led some protestants to cast away pagan and papal errors, and to walk in the ever-brightening path being illuminated by the Holy Spirit of Yahweh.

One final danger of the increasing light principle, which is connected to what has already been discussed above, is the use of the concept to place one's judgment above those who have gone before. It is a violation of the "conservative" principle of Bible Christianity to say, "Well, the prophets could have been wrong, so maybe I am right, even if I am disobeying." Or even worse, "Well, the prophet was wrong about *that* matter, and reversed himself or herself; maybe they are wrong about *this* also, so I can keep on doing what I want to do." This does not respect the "precedent" that inspired messengers are called by Heaven to set. It is true that such errors have occurred, and that messengers have retracted statements, (the Adventist tradition has a famous example of Ellen White first accepting and then rejecting pork as a suitable food for believers) but to arbitrarily question the insight of a messenger simply because it conflicts with what one may wish to do at a given time is a rejection of Yahweh's oft-affirmed mode of operation.

If a prophet's words are to be ignored, the same hierarchy of authority that has been described must be followed. Increasing light would be required that brings to view a new instruction, a new commandment, a new prophetic understanding, or a very strong parabolic or inferential conclusion to reject what would then be seen as the earlier doctrinal precedent. In this way, the Bible is held as supreme, and the Church would be self-correcting as long as the principles are understood and put into practice.

Chapter 6.5 – Summary

- 1) The Word is the foundation of faith, and Bible study yields numerous benefits.
- 2) As in all things, there is to be a balance between personal study and community solidarity in understanding doctrines. No believer is in a spiritual vacuum, and private interpretations of prophecies and teachings are contrary to the order established by Heaven.
- 3) Writings of Ellen G. White are inspired commentary on the Scriptures, but they do not supplant It; we must humbly accept what comes from Yahweh, but earnestly seek the meaning and context of what is presented.
- 4) The Laws of God include not only the commandments, but also laws of ceremony, health, cause-and-effect, and correspondences; all these laws are ultimately based on consistency and love.
- 5) Applying the proper principles of Bible study involves: critical thinking, seeking common concepts, studying the wording employed, becoming familiar with the poetic style of some passages, defining a word by its first use when possible, and remembering that the meanings of certain passages can be expanded to fit other concepts - but only if there are no factors that would restrict this expansion.
- 6) There is a descending order of importance to be placed on the Bible's information, this order being commandments and instructions, doctrinal discourses, prophetic utterances, symbolic or parabolic statements, precedents set by the figures discussed, inferences drawn from the text, and (least of all) assumptions and guesses about what is not explicitly revealed.
- 7) The principle of "Increasing Light" shows that more recent revelation may supplant (but not contradict) that which has come before.

Chapter 7: The Travelers' Song

Topics: The Paradox of Human Worth, Language and Communication, Evangelism, Identifying Erroneous Messengers and Identifying Truth

7.1 – Embracing The Paradox

7.1.1 – Stating the Paradox

Evangalism, in a certain sense, begins with the “self.” Anyone can testify of the truth, and anyone can speak of Christ, but true evangelism involves inviting others to enter one’s own experience, to become fellow travelers on the Highway of spiritual life. Satan and certain skeptical intellects have attempted to obscure both science and history, and to come up with clever-sounding rebuttals to the eternal principles enshrined in the Gospel. What they cannot do, however, is overcome the power of a *living* testimony, and this is what we are instructed to bear.

When Yahshua walked the earth, healing the sick and casting out demons, what could His detractors say against Him? Of course, they had much to say, but their contrived arguments were weak and ineffective in the face of the pure and matchless majesty of the Redeemer. When His people walk in His power, and openly reveal His character, even the most sophisticated arguments likewise fall short of reaching the hearts and convicting the minds of the onlookers.

John wrote of this kind of evangelism when He said, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Yahshua the Messiah. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” (1John 1:1, 3, 4)

Paul employed this kind of evangelism when He said, “I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,” (1Cor 11:23) and the Psalmist invites readers to share in His own experiences: “O taste and see that Yahweh is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.” (Psa 34:8)

When reading that evangelism begins with the “self,” it is not to be understood that there is to be any individual exaltation in this work. Indeed, pointing to one’s own merits and qualities means nothing when attempting to reveal to others their own need for the Savior and His atoning ministry. What it means is that we must do something that may, at first, seem like a contradiction - a paradox.

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The true evangelist must be entirely empty of self. He must manifest a perfect lack of pride, and perfect sensitivity to the needs of others. At the very same time, the true evangelist is inviting others to an experience that he himself has undergone; therefore, he is holding himself up as an example to be imitated. Before we examine just how this works, it is important to establish this idea from the Bible. We will find, as we study, that there are many instances of this apparently impossible state of mind.

Paul is one of the clearest examples of this, saying to others on several occasions, “be ye followers of me.” (1Cor 4:16, Phil 3:17) Here he holds himself up as an example to be trusted, yet he does not forget that the reason why he is such an example is because he himself is reliant upon Another, greater figure. He clarifies, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” (1Cor 11:1) Further, he goes on to say in another situation, “And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” (2Cor 3:4-6)

In other words, he says, we who are your ministers are to be respected and followed, not because of anything in us that we think is worthy, but because it is Yahweh who has made us to be these ministers, and our sufficiency (the Greek word used here means “competence” or “ability”) is in Him and His power. “God forbid that I should glory,” the apostle writes, “save in the cross of our Lord Yahshua the Messiah, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal 6:14)

Paul is not the only example. It was Moses himself who wrote, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” (Num 12:3) While this may seem like a prideful statement at first glance, it must be remembered that a) meekness was not particularly prized by the Israelites during the time of the exodus from Egypt, and b) under inspiration, the prophet was making a statement of fact, for by his time spent in the presence of the Most Holy, Moses had come to see himself as one in need of constant divine support. Isaiah, encountering a vision of Yahweh’s likeness, felt much the same, exclaiming, “Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of Hosts.” (Isa 6:5) These men had been brought face-to-face with the paradox of their relationship with Yahweh, and every true evangelist must undergo this experience to one degree or another.

Jeremiah received this word from the Almighty: “Thus saith Yahweh, ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Yahweh,

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which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth. For in these things I delight,' saith Yahweh.” (Jer 9:23, 24)



Emphasis Note

True humility is not synonymous with sorrow or a negative view of one's-self, but an honest personal assessment.

We must note that we are not told not to glory, or to rejoice. We are not told to deny that we are wise, or mighty, or even in possession of many resources, for these things all have their use. The *source* of our joy, Jeremiah is told, is not in these things, as beneficial as they are, but in our knowledge of the Creator, for it is this knowledge that leads to everlasting life. (John 17:3) The evangelist must know this, or he will be destroyed by the paradox.

Simply stated, and worded a little differently from its description above, the paradox is this: in order for a messenger to convey Biblical authority, he must believe two things about himself. First, the messenger of Heaven must believe that he is entirely worthless. (Job 25:5, 6; Psa 8:4) Second, the messenger of Heaven must believe that he is so important to the very Creator of the universe that He sent His only begotten Son to die in his place. (John 3:16)

The evangelist must embrace this paradox, for only in so doing is he able to truly understand what it means to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Lev 19:18, Mat 19:19) Only in so doing can members of the Church go about “preferring one another” (Rom 12:10) or putting the needs of others before their own. True humility consists not in denying the gifts and talents one possesses, but in acknowledging that these things are gifts to be used for the glory of the Giver, and to the benefit of our fellow humans. This is how we accept both the statements that deal with our personal worth. This is how we must think of ourselves in order to have anything of lasting value to share with others.

7.1.2 – The Two Ditches Revisited

As with most true principles we have been discussing in this guidebook, the path of righteousness and proper obedience is thin, but straight. There are errors and ditches on both sides of the road; Satan has realized that, failing to entirely keep the truth away from humanity, (which is protected by angels and supported by Yahshua's ministry) he is permitted to lead the willing and ungrounded into extremes. This is as effective, if not more so, than absolute error, for it has about it an appearance of validity.

Because of Yahweh's love for erring humanity, He has placed upon them an infinite price, the cost of His own Son's very life; this imputed value allows the redeemed to function as His representatives and perform the operations of Heaven even upon a cursed earth. Since this idea does not come intuitively to the natural mind, it is an easy thing for the tempters to corrupt

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those who are not being actively upheld by a vibrant connection to the divine. This is one of the reasons why the Victory message, for all its hope and power, is rejected and often actively denounced by those who should be its most fervent supporters: the professed followers of Christ.

Even those humbly seeking the true way have much to overcome as they walk along that narrow but unswerving road. The two ditches that are associated with this paradox are among the most subtle to detect and the most difficult to entirely avoid. Almost all of the Biblical figures fell victim to one of the two extremes to at least some degree, and of those none (with the sole exception of the prophet Elijah) were allowed to pass into Heaven without first visiting the grave. It would seem, therefore, that understanding and avoiding these ditches is a requirement for a place amongst that last generation of saints who are “alive and remain,” (1Th 4:15) and are never subjected to the sting of death.

Moses, drifting too far into the ditch of self-worth, equated his authority with the Creator’s, and asked of the Israelites, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” (Num 20:10) Because of this misstep he was unable to properly lead the tribes into the land of Canaan. (Deu 32:51, 52) David, overcome by the prestige of his kingship, began to act as the monarchs of the surrounding nations, taking that which he desired regardless of Yahweh’s instructions. (2Sam 11:1-4) Because of this he was nearly destroyed, (Psalm 51) and his remaining days were filled with many sorrows. (2Sam 12:10)

Elijah, reflecting too much on his mortality, and neglecting to rely upon the protection promised by Heaven, “arose and went for his life” (1Kings 19:3) when threatened by Queen Jezebel. Those of Paul’s day who had fallen into a works-based religion began to physically punish themselves if they erred, and used unsanctified methods in an attempt to develop discipline. (Col 2:20-23) They did not understand the unconditional and redeeming love that had become theirs through Yahshua’s grace. They had a “show,” an outward appearance, of willpower and humility, but these things were taken to the extreme of being the center of their message, rather than the result of a genuine conversion experience.

It bears mentioning, of course, that discipline is very much a part of the Christian life; taking up one’s cross and walking, practicing self-denial, and putting the needs of others before our own are all a part of the perfect example that Yahshua set. Such things as prayer and fasting are often useful ways to reflect on our potential missteps, and aids in asking for guidance and improvement. It is when these practices are used in the belief that we are gaining favor with Yahweh, or that harming the body will perfect the soul, that we have lost sight of the balance between faith and works. Paul himself practiced vows, (Acts 18:18) and disciplined his body; (1Cor 9:27) but his words in the letter to the Colossians were a warning to

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believers that in order to win a spiritual battle against self and sin, our weapons must likewise be spiritual rather than carnal. (2Cor 10:4)

Now, those who forget their humility make poor missionaries. If one feels superior to those being evangelized, it will be difficult to communicate to them the character of the Messiah, who came to serve, and not to be served. (Mat 20:28) On the other hand, some continuously rehearse their own wretchedness, a viewpoint often further ruined by an inability to overcome sin... and who would respond to a testimony of that miserable experience? Such as this may have hope for the future, but provide no practical testimony for their current circumstances. Rather than a victorious life being some fantasy, or merely the *ideal* Christian walk, the daily joy of salvation is precisely what the Scriptures promise to those who follow the teachings of Yahshua of Nazareth – to *all* those who follow.

It may not always be an easy walk, for “all that will live godly in Christ Yahshua shall suffer persecution,” (2Tim 3:12) but it will be one filled with a peace that surpasses the capacity of the unregenerate man to understand, (Phil 4:7) and will give us that living testimony we will need in order to warn and save souls. Evangelism begins with how we think of ourselves, and we must live in that paradox of being worth both nothing at all and everything at all, avoiding the equal and opposite ditches of hedonism and self-hatred along the way.

7.2 – A Pure Speech

7.2.1 – Why Words Matter

Our words matter. Yahweh says of His redeemed in the last days, “then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one consent.” (Zeph 3:9) The Hebrew word for “pure,” *barar*, means more than just free of profanity and unruly jesting. It conveys the idea that the speech of the people will be select, refined, polished and enlightened. It may not consist of many grandiose terms, which reflect only the “wisdom of the world,” (1Cor 3:19) but it will communicate timeless truths in language that can be understood by both the old and the young.

Words are an important aspect of our converted experience because they, like other actions, reveal the condition of our faith. Yahshua said plainly, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Mat 12:34-37)

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Yahshua actually begins this discourse by saying, “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit.” (Mat 12:33) This is an idea repeated elsewhere, such as, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Mat 7:15-20) This passage will be mentioned again in an upcoming section.

What these statements reveal is the high importance Yahweh places upon our choice of words. This only makes sense, because it is the means by which we communicate to each other, and transmit information that may potentially lead to the salvation or condemnation of others. Paul tells us of that faith that saves, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Rom 10:17) In another place he writes, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14)

Those ministers who are faithful to their calling (verse 15) will speak words of life. This does not, it must be understood, mean only “official” preachers and pastors; anyone who is willing may bear the words of life to those with ears to hear. As has already been said, genuine evangelism at its core is an invitation to share an experience. Every member of the Body of Christ has this responsibility, this privilege. How we present our experience is often a key element of our success as messengers, and we have been given several divinely inspired pointers to this end: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” (Col 4:6) “A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.” (Pro 15:1, 2)

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” (2Tim 2:24-26)

Aside from direct evangelism, we are told that our words are important also to ourselves. The Scriptures tell us of the last generation of those who stand victorious: “And [the saints] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” (Rev 12:11) The “him” in that verse refers to Satan, but not merely Satan; it is specifically describing him in that passage as the “accuser of our

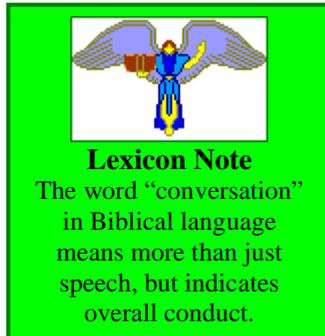
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brethren,” (verse 10) who seeks to undermine the perceived integrity of the saints to the on looking universe.

The saints respond by three things: First, they appeal to the “blood of the Lamb,” offered up to redeem and justify them. Second, they refer to their testimonies, and finally they refer to the sanctifying actions they have performed, standing for righteousness even if the consequences are fixed as death. Their testimonies, which are the subject of discussion at the moment, constitute a positive declaration of victory over sin, self and Satan; it is specifically the “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev 12:17)

Some have come to believe that the “faith of Jesus,” means simply believing in the Savior and His works, and that the “testimony of Jesus” means simply saying, “I believe in Him.” But the faith of Jesus means more than just believing in Him, it means having the same beliefs that He did. We are told, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (1John 3:2, 3) Even as Elohim is pure, this is how the believers in the Father and Son will stand in the last days, not merely believing in Him, but revealing to the world that this belief has led them to reflect His very likeness.

Likewise, the “testimony of Jesus” is not merely a declaration of discipleship. We are told, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.” (2Cor 1:12) Additionally, “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1John 1:5, 7)



In other words, John is saying, “This is our declaration (*i.e.*, testimony) of Him, that He has no darkness in Him. If we therefore say that we have fellowship with Him, but we contain darkness in us, we are liars. If our statement of fellowship with Him is true, then the blood of Christ will cleans use from all sin.” The testimony of our unity with the Creator will be shown true or false based upon the effect that this unity has on our lives – and visibly so. How strange that John’s words, which contain the clearest description of a believer’s victory over sin, are often plucked from their settings and used as an argument against the power of the Gospel.

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The testimony of Yahshua is simply that: His testimony. What did He say? He told His disciples, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” (John 14:30) “And He that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.” (John 8:29) When the believers truly bear the testimony of Yahshua they will not be ashamed to declare their co-victory with Him; they will not be consumed by false humility, which says, “I could never claim to be like Christ,” even though this was what He came to earth to accomplish. (1Cor 1:30) Neither will they be distracted from the testimony by genuine pride, which says, “I don’t need to say I am one with Him. I don’t need to say I have victory; my actions should speak for themselves.” Those who love their brothers as themselves will not hesitate to give an open testimony of conversion, for it is this that we are told draws men near to the heart of Yahweh.

7.2.2 - Communication

The nature of our communication to one another should ever reflect the principles of life. The Bible describes the interaction between the saints, “Then they that feared Yahweh spake often one to another, and Yahweh hearkened, and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before Him for them that feared Yahweh, and that thought upon His name. ‘And they shall be mine, saith Yahweh of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.’” (Mal 3:16-18) Here again we see the speech of those claiming sanctification being used as a valid indicator of the heart’s true state. This passage, in fact, contains several key concepts; for example it shows the close-knit relationship that exists between the members of Yahshua’s body. These faithful ones speak often with each other, none desiring to split apart and fragment into little doctrinally distinct groups.

Our manner of communication must ever be geared toward the display of *agape* love. This does not indicate mere sentimentality, or familiarity, for true love can take the form of reproof also. What the speaker should seek to do is avoid any unnecessary verbal force, and carefully consider both the wording and the intended effect, especially before attempting to transmit potentially delicate information. To this end, several “rules of thumb,” all rooted in Biblical theology, have been practiced in the Church.

7.2.2.1 – Declaring The Truth

This first principle, “declaring the truth,” seems fairly obvious, but it has very far-reaching applications. Naturally, we must declare the truth *about* other people, for the commandment says, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” (Exo 20:16) We must also speak the truth *to* other people, as we are instructed: “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” (Col 3:9)

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Declaring the truth, however, means also avoiding exaggeration, which serves to give a false impression of the information being shared. It involves leaving information out of a conversation that the hearer would require in order to make some important decision. It means speaking carefully, avoiding rambling on about loosely connected topics, for this also provides a distorted view of the issue being discussed.

Additionally, declaring the truth means speaking what is true about one's self. This involves reading and accepting the promises outlined in the Scriptures. For example, we are told by Yahshua, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John 14:27)

We are told, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom 8:37) We are given a catalogue of characteristics to describe those who have been converted: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal 5:22-24)

If this is a true description of the redeemed, then these are characteristics that are possessed by the saints, regardless of their own temptations and feelings of doubt. The practical application of this is that if we are these things: joyful, peaceful, gentle, kind, etc., then we will declare them. We do not speak these things out of any desire to exalt the self, but to reveal to others what a connection with the Savior has accomplished.

The true witness of the Gospel will never say, "I am..." followed by some opposing characteristic of the above list. The Christian should never say, "I am depressed," for has not Yahshua given us joy? The Christian should never say, "I am hasty," or "I am crude," for the Messiah has provided us with gentleness and kindness in abundance. This does not mean that we deny temptations exist, or ignore obvious facts. It simply means that we call things what they are.

For example, we would not say, "I am sad," because we have the joy of Christ. At the same time, circumstances may come about that lead to us feeling sad. In such a case, it is an honest report to say, "I feel sad." This seems like a subtle change, but the experience of those who utilize this simple method find that it works dramatically well. We are peaceful, joyful, loving and kind. These are things that define us. We may feel sad, annoyed, discouraged or unloved. Yet these are things that we define, as feelings, rather than equating them with our persons. To say, "I am" means that what follows is equated with, and descriptive of, "I." To say, "I feel" means that what follows is a feeling over which we have, by the power of Christ, control.

This is often one of the most important activities to practice as we learn to speak the truth in love. It eliminates all lasting effects of temptation, it

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gives us a powerful and honest Biblical testimony to share with others, and it sharpens our controls over our emotions, which Satan will often attempt to use as temptations.

7.2.2.2 – “I” messages and “You” messages

In our efforts to promote understanding and diplomacy in our conversations, sometimes even subtle changes to our wording can produce wonderful results. Just as “I am” is a powerful statement in our speech, so beginning a sentence with “I” has a different impact on our hearers than beginning one with “You.”

“I believe you have made a mistake” is a lot more palatable to most people than, “You’ve made a mistake.” The first offers a viewpoint, while the second imposes an accusation. The first is open, willing to examine the matter, while the second is closed, expecting a confession. Yahweh Himself employed a similar technique in the Garden after sin entered the human experience. He did not say, “Adam, come out of your hiding,” but instead invited a dialogue: “And Yahweh Elohim called unto Adam, and said unto him, ‘Where art thou?’” (Gen 3:9)

“I would like you to help me with this” is an encouraging invitation, which seeks to draw upon the compassion of another person. “You should help me with this” is an expression that can potentially imply that the individual should have been helping already.

The use of “I messages” when communicating one’s feelings and thoughts, while not a hard-and-fast rule, is often a very useful way to stimulate dialogue, rather than simply handing out judgments. This can make communication run more smoothly, particularly when dealing with personal issues that may tempt the hearers with defensiveness.

7.2.2.3 – Empathic Communication

When speaking with others, and attempting to explain something, it is often very important to understand certain things about our audience. Are they familiar with the concepts we are presenting? Are they able to understand the wording we use? What is their background in spiritual things, if it is the Gospel I am discussing?

The truth is that two people can see the same thing, or hear the same words, and come away with an entirely different interpretation of the experience. A common teaching in our congregation is the “Tale of The Knot,” which involves two individuals looking at a tree stump. One individual sees “one knot” in the wood, while the other sees “not one.” Since the words sound similar (knot and not are pronounced the same way) a potential disagreement may ensue, although both observers are perfectly correct from their viewpoint. To contend that there are “knotholes” in the wood sounds

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very much like a declaration that there are not (any) holes in the wood, and incidents such as this serve to highlight the need for the very important practice of defining our terms carefully.



Figure 7.1 – The Tale of The Knot

In spiritual matters, a Trinitarian and a non-Trinitarian may both be discussing the Holy Spirit. They may, however, have very different mental pictures of this concept. The Trinitarian sees a co-equal, co-eternal Person of the Godhead, one of a Triad of beings, or one aspect of a Triune God. The non-Trinitarian may see a *variety* of different things, including the Biblically accurate view of the Father and Son sharing a Holy Spirit, a personal but invisible presence of Themselves throughout the created universe.

Smooth communication involves, to a large degree, being able to see through the eyes and hear through the ears of our audience. We must be sure not only of what we say, but what they perceive from our words. Our intended meaning must match the meaning obtained by hearing us communicate, or it does not matter how eloquently we have presented our point; the procedure was a failure. Successful speaking has much to do with understanding the hearers, and entering into their experience as they listen.

If the Christian has a vital study life, and frequently studies the Scriptures, writing a sermon or a Bible study is no difficult task. He needs only to think of his audience and relate something they need to something he has seen in the Word and wishes to share. After that it is a simple matter of constructing a framework that introduces the topic, states the position, provides examples of its use, describes its application, and concludes the matter with the “bottom line.” Those that will do this, teaching empathically what the Body needs, are described in the Word: “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (Jer 3:15) “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you that He shall make him ruler over all His goods.” (Mat 24:45-47) To a smaller degree, this idea of providing “meat in due (*i.e.*, the appropriate) season” should apply to every one who shares the Gospel, whether it is with a large crowd, or only one person at a time.

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7.2.2.4 – Selecting The Hearers

It is also important, when seeking to enter into the hearers' experience, to be sure that we are addressing the correct (and a willing) audience. This is a further application of the oft-stated Gospel Order idea that is such a central topic to the Church's inner workings. If a member of the Body has something to say, or to share, to whom should he or she go? Ideally, if it is a matter of disagreement, the concerned individual should go to the one with whom the disagreement exists. If this does not work, witnesses are called, and then it is brought before the Church, as already discussed. (Mat 18:15-20)

If I communicate my concerns very clearly and precisely to brother B, but brother C is the one with whom I should really be speaking, this is still not a godly form of communication. Brother B does not benefit from hearing my words, and brother C does not benefit from failing to hear my well-stated reasoning. Finally, I do not benefit at all, because I am potentially stirring up further divisions among the members. I may get some advice from Brother B but this does little to address the initial problem I had, and further, it weakens the example I am setting for those around me.

If it is impossible or inconvenient to speak to the one about whom the concern is raised, care should still be exercised in choosing those in whom we can confide. Married women confiding in men about their personal issues, and married men seeking the confidence of outside women can often lead to inappropriate results, as can a man and wife opening up some of their internal disputes to their children or other family members. It is, of course, permissible to seek advice when dealing with difficult decisions, for "in the multitude of counselors there is safety;" (Pro 11:14) but this should not eclipse one's own ability to make decisions, and it should never be used to violate the privacy that Yahweh has placed around certain relationships. Wisdom is needed, and care must be taken, in selecting the audience for one's words.

7.2.2.5 – Style of Speech

Face-to-face communication is always two-way, even if only one person is doing the speaking. Having our speech display "grace, seasoned with salt," (Col 4:6) involves more than just saying the right thing, but also conveying it in the proper manner. Grace also involves the "social graces," which are involved with sensitivity toward the recipients of our company.

We should speak in order to be heard, deliberately, not too quickly or slowly, and seeking feedback, even if such signals are non-verbal. Watching body language is a very important way to increase one's empathy with the audience. A speaker may know the effect his words are having if the listeners become angry, bored or defensive. When Yahshua spoke to

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the multitudes, He was ever mindful of their physical condition. When He had been out with them for a very long time He said to His disciples, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.” (Mark 8:2)

Paul, when speaking of those gifted with other languages, said, “How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; [*i.e.*, in a set order] and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.” (1Cor 14:26-28)

Though this addresses a particular issue, the principle is revealed clearly: the things that Christians speak, particularly at the assemblies of believers, are intended for the growth and development of the Church. If the audience cannot understand us – and that for *any* reason – it is better to remain silent, rather than to convey useless or confusing information. Being familiar with one’s self and, to a significant degree, the audience’s reaction, is essential to clear communication.

7.2.2.6 – Avoiding Officiousness

Communication with others extends beyond mere words. Our actions in their presence often have much to say about our spiritual experiences. It is important in our contact with others to avoid officiousness, which is defined as “objectionably aggressive in offering one’s unrequested and unwanted services, help, or advice; meddlesome.” [Based on the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, © Random House, Inc. 2006]

An officious person can often go undetected amongst professed Christians, because the offering of advice and help seems to be in line with sanctified virtue. It is true that advice and assistance are beneficial characteristics, and a desire to be helpful is a blessing; at the same time, the one who wishes to offer help must be aware of his or her intended target’s desires. Good communication will often establish if there is a genuine need to be alleviated, or if the person doing the work is able to accomplish the intended goal alone. Indeed, it is often an important aspect of sanctification to attempt a difficult objective by one’s self, so that refinement and growth can occur during the process.

The Bible speaks of those who “flee, as fleeing from a sword; and [...] fall when none pursueth.” (Lev 26:36) These are the ones who act without a legitimate cause (thus, they violate the cause-and-effect natural law). The one who aggressively offers unwanted or unneeded words or aid is likewise pursuing a causeless course of action, which breaches the fine line between being courteous and being obnoxious. It is often the case that the location of this distinguishing line depends upon two factors: the circumstances, and

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the intended recipient of the help. This is yet another place in which a clear exchange of thoughts and feelings can do nothing but improve the state of affairs.

7.3 – Evangelism

7.3.1 – The Mechanics of Evangelism

In a previous section of this chapter, evangelism was described as an invitation to share in an experience, rather than a mere process of convincing someone to alter his or her ways and beliefs. There are some wrong ways, and some right ways, of producing this result. One of the clearest examples in the Scriptures of Yahweh’s dealings with mankind comes from the transcript of a conversation between Him and one of His closest human friends.



Instructor Note

For online and printed evangelism resources, see the information in the General Appendix or ask your study partner.

“And He said, ‘Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Yahweh.’ And, behold, Yahweh passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his

mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’” (1Kings 19:11-13)

There are many deep ideas that may be extracted from this passage, such as the fact that Elijah was able to recognize the true voice of Yahweh despite the many powerful manifestations that came with His presence. For the topic of evangelism, however, we may see that there is a marked contrast between the way the Almighty must speak with human beings at times and the way that He truly wishes to speak with them.

There are occasions, such as at Mount Sinai, when it is appropriate for the Creator to speak amidst great power and majesty. This commands respect, and even fear, inspiring a history of the event designed to persist and impress its hearers for thousands of years. On the other hand, among friends Yahweh seeks to reveal His loving, gentle heart. Though He is surrounded by irresistible majesty, those who know Yahweh’s character best are those who are familiar with His “lovingkindness and tender mercies.” (Psa 103:4)

It is by this aspect of the Almighty that He draws sinners to Himself. The Scriptures tell us precisely this, “that the goodness of God leadeth [...] to

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repentance.” (Rom 2:4) This is not to say that the warnings of judgment and the pointing-out of the consequences of disobedience do not have their place. Some, whose hearts are not so receptive, are often first awakened to their need for Yahshua by fear; the Word tells us some will be saved by this means. (Jude 1:23) Yet once this initial awakening is achieved, it is not fear that leads to lasting loyalty, but love. Understanding this is necessary to properly represent the Father and Son.

Paul writes that our job is to “persuade” men, (2Cor 5:11, Gal 1:10) not to force them into intellectual submission. We are not to knock down the arguments in support of their position until they have absolutely nothing left (although there is the need to do this to some degree when dealing with one who is willing to hear, but still resisting conviction). Instead, the effective evangelist seeks to build upon the knowledge of the holy already possessed by the hearer, gently correcting misconceptions and leading him or her into still greater light.

Fire, earthquakes and whirlwinds may be useful in drawing attention to the subject, but nothing of artificial sensation or display should be involved in the heart-work required to lead others to genuine conversion. The use of force, or the employment of unnecessary “fear tactics” will not prove to be effective methods of sanctifying others. It is gentleness and love that provide the best means.

Additionally, and related to the above idea of choosing one’s audience, adopting a proper tone when dealing with the Gospel is essential as well.

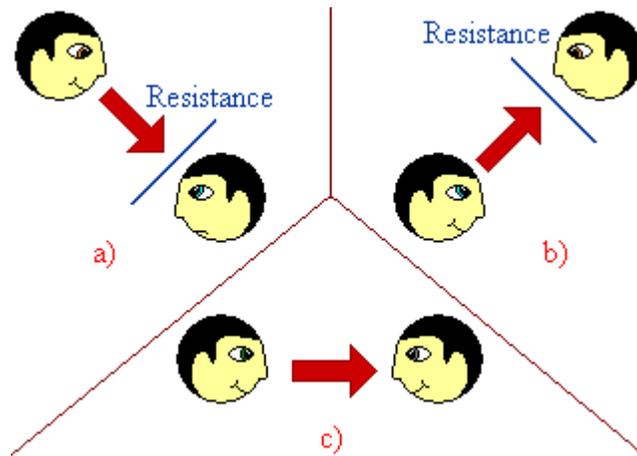


Figure 7.2 – The Path of Least Resistance

Most individuals will naturally resist one who comes across as being prideful or condescending (Figure 7.2a). We are instructed to expect this reaction, for the Bible tells us, “Yahweh shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.” (Psa 12:3) We cannot, therefore, anticipate being blessed, or successful, if we are embracing a principle so opposed to Yahweh’s character.

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Similarly, many have the tendency to take lightly the words of those whom they decide are noticeably inferior (Figure 7.2b). Jeremiah the prophet understood this, saying, when he was called to his office, “Ah, Adonai Yahweh! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child.” (Jer 1:6) Just as Jeremiah was corrected for his doubts by the Almighty Himself, so Paul instructed Timothy not to be discouraged by those who would think less of him because of his relative youth. He was to rise up and meet them where they were. (1Tim 4:12)

The best policy in regard to the “level” between the speaker and the audience is to seek equality in all things but the Gospel. If we did not believe we had a greater understanding of the Truth than those with whom we are speaking, why would we even discuss the topic? At the same time, our knowledge of the truth must never lead us to give the impression that there is some merit in us by which we are able to grasp it. Instead, we are to be portrayed as infinitely grateful to the Almighty for saving us from destruction, as He is willing to do for all who will come to Him for help.

Of the equality in all else, Paul writes, “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.” (1Cor 9:19-23)

In this we find the balance, while meeting men and women where they are, as Yahweh has done with us, and seeking to find common ground from which to evangelize, we must remember that we do represent divine authority. Yahshua said of us, “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me.” (Mat 10:40) Again, “Remember the word that I said unto you: the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:20)

7.3.2 – The First Mission Fields

When speaking of the spiritual state of the world, Christ remarked, “Say not ye, ‘There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest’? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” (John 4:35)

The time is right for the sheaves to be gathered into the barn, for those who are willing to hear and receive the truth to receive it. The field is large, however, and the workers are very few, so a legitimate question to ask is,

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“Where do we begin?” Some have said, “We must evangelize the world,” so they go off to some distant country and attempt to reach the heathen, while others go door to door with booklets and offer Bible studies. Which is the best approach?

When sin first entered the world, it was due to a failure in communication, and in mutual care. Adam and Eve had a mission field; they were to have dominion over the earth and its life forms, yes, but they were also to care for each other. Eve was to be a “suitable helper” for her husband, (Gen 2:18) and Adam was to be the guide and companion of his wife. This was their first external mission field, to care for the one with whom each was “one flesh.” As Paul wrote, “no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church,” (Eph 5:29) and so ought it to be between husbands and wives to this day.

After the self and the home circle, the next sphere of influence is that of one’s friends and close associations. After healing one individual, the Savior said to him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” (Mark 5:19)

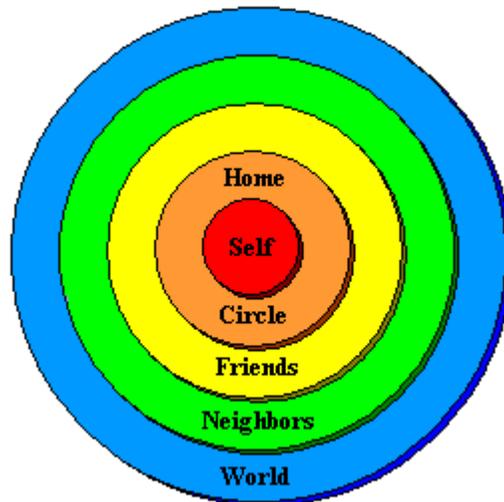


Figure 7.3 – The Circles of Influence

The fourth circle is that of neighbors and other acquaintances, those with whom we have some occasion of contact. Many in first days of the Gospel, and the years thereafter, were introduced to the Messiah by those who knew of the disciples, and came to see what it was that had people talking. Yahshua personally influenced many by the actions described here: “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Yahshua stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water’ (but this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Yahshua was not yet glorified). Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, ‘Of a truth this is the Prophet.’” (John 7:37-40)

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The final circle in the concentric regions of influence (Figure 7.3) is the rest of the world. We are ultimately to go to “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9) so that the last generation of saints may be gathered in.

Of course, there is a reason the circles are concentric; as we’ve already seen, evangelism begins with the “self,” and proceeds logically outward, like ripples in a pond, until the world is filled with the knowledge of Yahweh. There are some who, having the means but less of the discernment, neglect the inner circles of self, household and friends, and run off to distant lands, believing that by so doing they are advancing the Kingdom of Heaven. To be sure, all need to hear the Gospel. To be sure, Yahweh can use even these out-of-order efforts to reach His willing children in other lands. Yet His original and best plan is that the order outlined in Scripture be followed precisely, to yield the greatest results.

He said to His disciples, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mat 10:5, 6) Yahshua did not neglect those of the Gentiles who sincerely wished His presence with them, (*e.g.*, Mark 7:24-30, John 4:5-42) but His primary focus was initially toward “His own.” (John 1:11) After the death and resurrection His disciples were instructed by the risen Savior, by various means, that the Kingdom of Heaven had no such borders as they had imagined. Both Peter and Paul were thereafter instrumental in taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. (Acts 10, Rom 15:15, 16) This principle reveals that while the Gospel is *never* to be exclusively held by, or directed toward, any particular group, there is nevertheless to be a progression of focus as inspiration and the given situations dictate.

In these last days, technology has given the Christian something of an advantage. By means of the latest tools, such as the Internet and email systems, the Gospel can be made available to those both near and far. It should not be thought, however, that this convenience removes or lessens the need for personal evangelism in all of the regions described above.

7.3.3 – The Stars Forever and Ever

Evangelism consists primarily of revealing to others, by means of our words and actions, the “Good News” about Yahweh’s character: His loving kindness, His patience, His forgiveness, His desire for union with us, His willingness to pay an infinite price for our salvation.

The results of this evangelism may be seen both here on earth, and in the world to come. There is a positive benefit, even for one’s self, to giving a true testimony, for in the speaking of a thing we constantly reaffirm it to ourselves, constantly study it to share with others, and constantly see the effects it has upon those who hear us. It is written, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might

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know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1Cor 2:12, 13)

The things that we share with others are from the Holy Spirit, not from ourselves; (John 3:27) therefore, in the sharing of them we also receive that light which comes from Heaven. As we speak the truth we also hear the things that we say, and benefit from "the wisdom that is from above," which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (James 3:17, 18)

From the perspective of eternity, we read Yahshua's words that, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven." (Mat 10:32, 33) This is not, of course, by way of retribution – as if He were vengeful because we did not speak of Him – but in observance of the "Law of correspondences" that we have already discussed. The physical world does affect the spiritual, and if we fail to give a testimony it is because we have failed to *receive* a testimony to give, and we thus manifest our lack of union with the Messiah.

Further still, there are some who will be asked in that Day, "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" (Jer 13:20) While the most obvious application of this idea involves pastors and elders, what of husbands, wives, relatives and friends? The principle applies equally to all, for we are to preach the Gospel to "every creature" capable of understanding and responding to the love of Yahweh, not only those visibly placed under our immediate authority. (Mark 16:15)

Not for pride's sake, but for love's, must we seek to win many hearts to Yahweh's cause. The Scriptures say of those who understand the principle of *agape*, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan 12:3) This is the work of the Christian, the work of the evangelist: to testify the glory of the Father and Son, and to lead others to acknowledge that which we bring to them in joy and peace and love.

7.4 – Testing The Spirits

7.4.1 – Truth and Error

Some of the information that the apostles have provided to us about the last days have the potential to be rather alarming. We read, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to

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themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2Tim 4:2-4)

We are then told the means by which it will happen: “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30) There will be those, among the people who are trained in the truth, who will turn away from service to the Almighty, and will manifest all manner of deception in order to get disciples for themselves. They will appear, to those with weak discernment, to be perfectly righteous men, “for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” (2Cor 11:13-15)

The deceptions were subtle even two thousand years ago, necessitating epistles and sermons from those who knew the truth, warning the Christians to avoid the errors being spread abroad. With that much more practice in misleading humanity, Satan’s allurements have only grown more effective over time; “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Mat 24:24)

Now salvation, it is true, is based upon one’s personal acceptance of Christ, and not necessarily on the details of doctrines and practices. This does not mean, however, that one can accept faulty teachings and expect to have a genuinely sanctifying experience. Errors in the things we believe warp and twist our view of the One to whom these doctrines are to point, and we ultimately may find ourselves worshipping some other god entirely, or being so ineffective in our connection with the true Creator that we are unable to discern His guiding hand.



External Link Note

A study on the practical results believing certain doctrines is found here:
<http://csda.us/binary/newmoons/NMNov05.html>

The Scriptures are very clear on the importance of seeking and accepting the truth: “For without [New Jerusalem] are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” (Rev 22:15) “The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail; for the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” (Isa 9:15, 16) “Therefore thus saith Yahweh concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, ‘Sword and famine shall not be in this land,’ By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to

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bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.” (Jer 14:15, 16)

This is a dramatic expression of the Corporate Accountability principle that we have examined in Chapter 2.3 of Volume 1. Although it is not given this title there, the doctrine is expressed by pointing out that a part of the Third Gospel Angel’s message, (Rev 14:9-12) involves avoiding organizations that have united under the beast-power of the last days. Those under whose spiritual authority we are placed have a great responsibility toward us in Yahweh’s eyes; and at the same time, we have a personal responsibility to avoid error and move toward the truth.

The Scriptures tell us, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me, seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hos 4:6) Note that it is not simple ignorance that is considered the crime of Heaven, but rather a *love* for that ignorance to the degree that the knowledge of the truth is neglected when it is finally encountered. Those who are genuinely ignorant, and humble enough to acknowledge their need, will rejoice in the truth as new light comes to them, and will not fall into the great Laodicean error of thinking, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” (Rev 3:17)

What this boils down to is that the deceptions of Satan are often very subtle, altering the very characters of those who receive them and removing a love for the truth. Because of this great subtlety, it requires far more than a mere casual knowledge of the Scriptures to avoid error. It takes an intimate knowledge of both the Book Itself and Its divine Author to remain true to principle, and it is to our benefit to examine the instructions that we are given regarding identifying false teachings.

A word should be said here about the need to separate the message from the messenger. These two things sometimes need to be evaluated independently. It is not necessary that one like the one bearing the message. Whether or not the doctrine is true is based upon its correspondence with the wording and concepts of the Scriptures, not the one whom Yahweh has chosen to use as a presenter. As it is written, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isa 8:20) It is important to insert the word “sometimes,” as in “*sometimes* need to be evaluated independently.” We notice that in the above verse, the great test of doctrine; it is the messenger, and not the message, that is the object of the decision.

While Yahweh can sometimes use individuals we do not personally like to bring us an aspect of truth (often precisely to help us overcome some irrational dislike or prejudice) we must still be able to determine whether or not the messenger is truly sent by the Creator. The Biblical tests of a prophet or messenger are provided in an upcoming section, but here it is

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necessary to point out that mere “dislike” of the messenger is not a reason to reject either the individual or the message being offered. There needs to be a more sanctified basis for accepting or rejecting either of these, and we are not left in ignorance of this basis.

7.4.2 – Biblical Examples of Doctrinal Errors

Examining the truth is generally far more valuable than examining errors. This should make sense to all readers, for there are many errors and only one truth. If any book should seek to examine all the errors that have been or may arise within Christianity, there would be no end to the writing process. Familiarity with the genuine article is usually the most effective way to identify the counterfeits. More importantly, walking in the doctrines one knows is necessary for remaining free of error, since a mere intellectual knowledge of the truth is neither sanctifying nor useful in any other way. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7:17)

At the same time, there have been some notable errors in the course of Christian history, so much so that the Scriptures themselves testify against them. It might be instructional, therefore, to take a brief look at the record of these false doctrines that Yahweh has preserved for our edification.

7.4.2.1 – Gnosticism

In John’s letters, he indicates that there was a sect of believers that had accepted a form of Gnosticism, in which all that was physical was “evil,” and irredeemably, so. Therefore, they reasoned, the Son of God (who was “good”) could not truly have come in a physical form. This phantom appeared to be flesh, but the death and resurrection were merely symbolic, or instructive, and did not truly satisfy any form of divine justice. The practical application of this belief was that the spirit-Savior had saved us “in the spirit,” but our flesh was still free to sin with no consequences to our salvation.

John warns Christians not to accept this new teaching, saying, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1John 4:3, *cf.*, 1John 4:2, 2John 1:7) He then counters the application of this belief, saying, “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” (1John 3:7, 8) This was directly opposed to the idea of being “saved in the spirit” for, as John and James wrote, true salvation is not merely a matter of the spirit, but of the whole person.

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7.4.2.2 – *Faulty Tests of Fellowship*

Among the many and wonderful gifts given by Yahweh to mankind by means of the Holy Spirit, tongues was one of the most visible and dramatic to witness. It was such a clear indication of the presence of the Almighty, in fact, that Paul noted it as an effective sign “to them that believe not.” (1Cor 4:22)

Unfortunately, in the Corinthian congregation, the situation was quickly becoming unmanageable. The ability to speak in a language that had not been learned by natural means, (Act 2:6-12) though a relatively minor spiritual gift, and one specifically mentioned as not being exhibited in all converts, (1Cor 12:28-30) was being seen as a sign of true conversion, or at least great spiritual advancement.

A large part of Paul’s first recorded letter to this Church was designed to set them straight on the matter. It first set tongues in its proper place within the list of gifts, (1Cor 12:28) explaining that it was just one of many, and that not all believers would exhibit this characteristic. (verse 30) Next, it held up *agape*-love as the true gift that all believers are to possess. (chapter 13) Finally, the letter indicates that tongues, while they have their useful place, are not to be used as any kind of internal test of faith, and in fact should not be used at all in the assembly unless it is interpreted by one who is able to do so for the benefit of all who hear. (chapter 14)

The bigger picture, of which this incident with tongues was only the example, is that there is a tendency of certain individuals to erect their own “tests” to see whether or not the believers are “genuine.” This is a great error, for we are already told what the characteristics of the members of Christ will display in the last days; interestingly enough, most of these characteristics are identified most plainly in the writings of one Biblical author.

Believers will have and speak the “faith of Jesus,” and consequently keep the “commandments of God.” (Rev 14:12) They will declare and reveal spiritual unity with the Father and Son. (John 17:21) They will express love to one another. (John 13:35) They will have ceased from all known sin. (1John 3:9, 5:18) They will exist in a state of spiritual rest that comes from an understanding of the true Sabbath. (Heb 4:10) They will have a strong desire to reach out to others with their faith, and draw them also into the truth. (2Cor 5:9-11)

7.4.2.3 – *Legalism*

Coming out of what had unfortunately become a very exclusivist and restrictive set of traditions, the early Christians (who were primarily Jewish) were both very sensitive to, and often tempted by, legalistic tendencies. We find records such as the following: “And certain men which came down

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from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, ‘Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.’” (Acts 15:1)

We find the apostles voicing rebukes such as the following: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal 3:1-3)

The Old Testament, for the purposes of refining and sanctifying the behavior of the community Yahweh had chosen, contains much emphasis on acts of obedience to the Law. It must be emphasized, however, that at its very heart, the religion of Yahweh was always about faith, and not about works. We read of Abraham, the forefather of the monotheistic faiths, “he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also, and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” (Rom 4:11-13)

It is certainly the case that works of the law demonstrated one’s faith to others, and exercised that faith in order for it to develop and grow, (James 2:22) which is why Yahweh gave so many rituals. Yet these rituals were all intended to point forward to the works of *Yahweh*, not of mankind, for the sake of justifying humanity. (78:5-7) It was only when those works were mistakenly seen as ends unto themselves and that righteousness came from the mere act obedience that the poison of legalism entered into the Hebrew religion. (Rom 3) In an effort to avoid the transgressions of the nation around them, such as the idolatry that plagued Israel up until the time of Nehemiah, they unfortunately went so far as to consider Gentiles unsuitable for even the most casual of contact. (Acts 10:28)

We are to be “perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works,” (2Tim 3:17) and the precise inheritance each obtains depends on some measure upon “the things done in [the] body, according to that he hath done,” (2Cor 5:10) but we are not justified in Heaven’s eyes thereby. (Gal 2:16) The works reveal justification, but they do not produce it; misunderstanding this was, and is, the great error of legalism.

7.4.2.4 – *Licentiousness*

On the other side of the road, (Figure 7.4) we find the alternative ditch. Some congregations and individuals in the early Church, perhaps in an

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effort to avoid the restrictions of the Judaizers and legalists, began to use the idea of “grace” as an excuse for sin. “Since obedience does not justify,” the reasoning went, (though it was rarely so stated) “disobedience does not condemn.” They thus went about “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, [Gk: *aselgeia* – excess, licentiousness] and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Yahshua the Messiah.” (Jude 1:4)

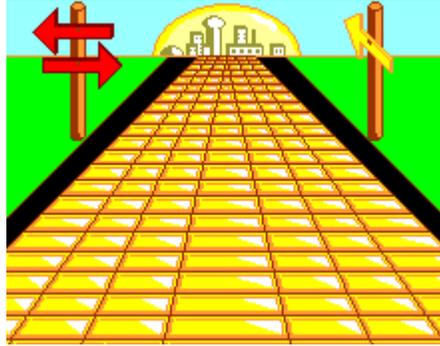


Figure 7.4 – The Two Ditches

To such as these the apostles wrote, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Yahshua the Messiah, hath abounded unto many. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom 5:14, 15; Rom 6:1, 2)

The Gnostic belief, which is described above, is merely a refinement of this general idea, that if one is “saved,” the actions do not matter. What we find, however, is a system of discipline set in place in the Church, including the Gospel Order principle, in order to deal with offenders. If grace made the ideas of obedience and transgression obsolete, why are there so many measures in place for discipline?

We find the writings of Christ’s representatives speaking often against those who violated the Law and its principles: “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.” (1Cor 5:1, 2) Paul concludes with this instruction regarding the unrepentant sinner: “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (verse 13)

The “goodness of God” was intended to lead men to repentance from evil works, (Rom 2:4) not to a celebration of the freedom to sin, as if there were any true freedom in slavery. The truth is that the Scriptures never excuse or

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lessen the guilt for sin. Transgression was as fatal after the Cross as it was before. (Rom 6:23a) What we do find, however, is that a solution for the condition of rebellion is offered to the individual in the Person and sacrifice of Yahshua. (Rom 6:23b, Rom 10:9) Accepting this causes one to receive the forgiveness of the Almighty (Acts 26:18) and, further, it unites one with the Father and Son. (John 17:21, 1John 1:7, 1Cor 12:13) This atonement alters the very course of life for the convert, (2Cor 5:17) and works will follow faith as surely as the fruit comes forth from the fruit tree. (James 2:18, Luke 6:43-45)

7.4.3 – The Biblical Tests

7.4.3.1 – Tests For A Prophet

As indicated above, the Bible does speak of rejecting messages based upon the unsuitability of the messenger. This does not mean – it bears repeating – that personal dislike or disapproval should be used as a means to dismiss what may well be a divinely inspired revelation. Great care must be taken in this matter. Concerning this the Scriptures say, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1John 4:1)

The question then becomes, “How is this to be done?” Humanity must be very careful about erecting its own “tests” of truth. The only sure way to know whether or not a message is from the Creator is to go to the trusted sources, the foundation-work of the Bible and the Spirit of Truth. In order to effect this, many Christian groups (including mainstream Seventh-day Adventism) have produced a list of criteria. We will examine this list briefly here to see if it is reasonable, comparing it with the Words of Scripture.

In essence, the key Seventh-day Adventist tests of a prophet – along with some of the verses used to support them – are:

- 1) Accuracy of predictions: “And if thou say in thine heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?’ When a prophet speaketh in the name of Yahweh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahweh hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.” (Deu 18:21-22)
- 2) Visions and/or dreams: “And he said, ‘Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.’” (Num 12:6)
- 3) Physical manifestations: “For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.” (Dan 10:17)

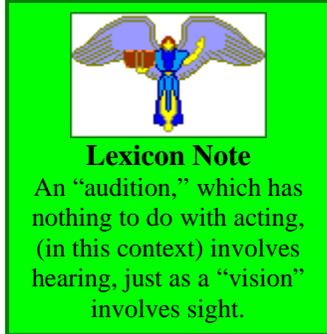
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- 4) Honesty: “The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.” (Jer 28:9)
- 5) Agreement of statements and interpretations with established truth (e.g., the Bible): “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” (2Pet 1:20) “To the Law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isa 8:20)
- 6) Edification of the Church: “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” (1Cor 14:3)
- 7) Prophecy in the name of the Lord/Yahweh: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2Pet 1:21)
- 8) Belief of the prophet in the physical reality of Christ: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Yahshua the Messiah is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Yahshua the Messiah is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1John 4:2, 3)
- 9) Positive personal testimony: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Mat 7:15, 16, 20)

Let’s look at these very briefly:

- 1) The first test, accuracy of predictions, is certainly a valid test, if *accuracy* is properly understood. The accuracy of a prophecy’s fulfillment simply means that Yahweh intended to bring about the promised effect. This does not set aside the previously-examined principle of prophecy’s conditionality, and we have already noted the examples of Jonah and Ezekiel, both true prophets, the fulfillments of whose words were delayed or altered based upon the change in spiritual climate. (Jonah 3:10, Ezek 37:28, and see Section 4.6 of Volume 1) As we referenced earlier, “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant

it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.” (Jer 18:7-10)



2) The second test, concerning visions and dreams is also quite valid, based upon the Scriptures presented. In fact, we could even add “Insights and auditions” to the list of means by which Yahweh contacts humanity prophetically. We read here: “Then the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and

spake with me, and said unto me, ‘Go, shut thyself within thine house.’” (Ezek 3:24) These are, it is important to note, possible means of prophetic communication; not every prophet will manifest all of these characteristics.

- 3) The third test, frankly, is almost completely useless. While it is certainly true that some prophets may have physical manifestations such as a cessation of breath, a trance-like appearance on their faces, or sudden rigidity while in vision, there is no Biblical precedent for taking these occasional specifics and making of them a general rule. This aspect of the test appears rather contrived in some (not all) Seventh-day Adventist literature, being tailor-made to the reports of Ellen G. White’s prophetic gift. Nothing can be said with certainty from the Scriptures about physical manifestations of divine power being a necessary component of any given prophecy or calling.
- 4) Numbers 4, 5, 7 and 8 are all connected, and all true. A prophet will certainly speak the truth, including acknowledging the incarnation of the Messiah and the validity of all Scripture. The prophet will say nothing based upon his or her own authority, but will speak as directed by the Creator. Little needs to be added to this.
- 6) The sixth criterion is basically true; a prophet will speak for the edification of the Church. Of course, there have been and are isolated cases in which the prophet will speak against the *established* order, which most in that day would consider the “Church.” This is one of the primary reasons why Stephen asked of the Hebrew nation, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?” (Acts 7:52a) In cases of great apostasy, prophets have spoken against the nation, telling them to flee what they had once considered secure (*e.g.*, Jeremiah, or Peter in Acts 2) or a need for structural changes (*e.g.*, Samuel concerning Saul’s rejection, or Christ Himself in Matthew 21:43).

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- 9) The ninth criterion, that a prophet's life will be holy and reflect the principles being presented, is generally true. There are, however, three things to keep in mind. First, prophets are human, despite their divine commission, and Scripture contains records of prophets making errors in judgment and delivering opinions in haste. Second, some individuals who were decidedly not sanctified had use of the prophetic gift; these spoke the truth when receiving direct divine insight, (Numbers 22) but were certainly not exemplary worshippers of Yahweh. Third, and perhaps connected to the previous two points, we must remember to separate the message from the messenger. Yahweh has sent, and may again, His message through unpopular or even despised means in order to awaken humility in the intended recipients. The eyes and ears of the genuine Christian will be open to wisdom, even from unexpected sources.

Based on the above, and the verses there presented, the most important test of a prophet is the following:

A prophet's words must be reliable, particularly when speaking in Yahweh's name. They will accurately portray the Person and characteristics of the Creator, urging a course of repentance and holiness for those who hear the message.

Of secondary importance is the means by which the information is obtained. There may be visions, dreams, or simply the insight of the Spirit. The validity of this may be verified by a comparison of the principles being spoken with those revealed in the Bible, for the prophet will not contradict light that has come before.

Thirdly, the prophecy spoken must be fulfilled if there is no change in the spiritual condition of the prophecy's intended beneficiaries, whether it is a promise of blessings or a warning of disaster.

7.4.3.2 – Tests For An Evangelist

The tests for a non-prophetic messenger of Heaven are very similar to those for the prophet. All the characteristics are there, except for those aspects designed to test the divine insight directly.

Thus the evangelist will:

- 1) Speak reliable words, "rightly dividing the word of truth." (2Tim 2:15)
- 2) Claim to be acting on behalf of the Father and Son, and expect to be received as such. (Mat 10:40)

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- 3) Urge faith and heartfelt repentance, declaring, “The day of Christ is at hand.” (2Th 2:2)
- 4) Be in agreement with light that has come before; of course, he or she may correct *misconceptions* about previous light, or expand the knowledge of the audience, (Acts 19:2) so humility is required to receive a message that is relatively “new.”
- 5) Promote unity of the Body of Christ, (1Cor 1:10, John 17:21) rather than divisions. See below for more details on this aspect.

The first criterion, that of speaking reliably, has further application than merely speaking reliably about the Bible. The messenger of the true Faith is trustworthy and sincere in his speech. He is not prone to exaggeration or wild conclusions. While naturally wary of the Babylonian condition of the world, one who has been with Christ has taken His instruction to heart: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: *see that ye be not troubled.*” (Mat 24:6) Thus, the Protestant who sees a Jesuit infiltrator in every shadow, the clergyman who fills his sermons with conspiracy theories gleaned from speculative reports, and the alarmist who speaks constantly of the Freemasons and Illuminati have nothing – *nothing* – to do with the soul-satisfying religion of Yahshua the Messiah. “For Yahweh spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, ‘Say ye not, “A confederacy,” to all them to whom this people shall say, “A confederacy,” neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify Yahweh of hosts Himself; and let *Him* be your fear, and let *Him* be your dread.’” (Isa 8:11-13)

In any event, comparing the characteristics listed in Scripture, the main difference between an evangelist and a prophet is a simple one: the evangelist will have received the Gospel from personal study and/or the work of another messenger, rather than through direct divine revelation. This is an important factor to consider, but the similarities are more significant. For example, just like the prophet, the teacher will speak “to the edifying of the Church.” (1Cor 14:12; *cf.*, Eph 4:11, 12) Thus, while the messenger may initially receive the truth in a solitary manner, (*e.g.*, Saul in Acts 9:1-9) he or she will never become a “self-sent messenger,” or one who seeks to obtain followers away without explicit divine sanction. (Acts 9:26, 27) It is not the true messenger who says, “There is a doctrinal error in this Church; let us come apart and form our own congregation.” There are Biblically sanctioned reasons for a new Bride being called out from the old, yes, but it is never because of simple doctrinal errors, and never without accompanying prophetic and apostolic activity. (*e.g.*, Acts 2) No teachers or evangelists, in the absence of this gift, are authorized to go to the living Church and “draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:30)

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7.4.4 – Modern Extensions

In recent years, Satan has become more cunning in his deceptions. He has not, on the other hand, become noticeably more original, for as Solomon mused, “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.” (Ecc 1:9) In other words, the modern errors and heresies may be clothed in new apparel, but they represent the same old principles being urged upon humanity since the Garden of Eden.

Those who have read the section on Gnosticism, and the basic error of licentiousness should not have missed the similarity this belief holds with the more modern concept of “once-saved-always-saved,” or “eternal security.” This doctrine says essentially what these deceivers always taught, that once one is “saved” the spirit is secure and “the things done in his body” (2Cor 5:10) have no impact or, more accurately, fail to reflect, the individual’s character and subsequent destiny. One of the verses urged in support of this idea is Christ’s statement: “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck [the converts] out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:29)

The above statement is perfectly true. No man is able to cause us to lose our faith. We could go even further, adding that no demon has the power to do so either, for “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1Cor 10:13)

In fact, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Yahshua our Lord.” (Rom 8:35-39)

These things are all true, yet they all address *external* sources. No power may take us from the Father’s hand, because His power is supreme. At the same time His power is never used to force love, obedience or loyalty; therefore, the individual being held and protected is free (as was Adam, as was Lucifer) to depart from the courts of grace. The Scriptures give us solemn warnings of those who once had the truth, once lived the sanctified life, and then departed, advising, “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” (Heb 4:11)

Similarly, those who teach the doctrine of “absolute predestination” believe that humanity is not free to choose at all, but conceive of the sovereignty of

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Yahweh as an absolute but arbitrary control over even those beings whom He specifically created in His own image. (Gen 1:27) Every book of the Bible, in one way or another, states or implies a moral choice that the reader is to make.

Modern *glossolalia*, or tongue-speaking, repeats and intensifies the errors of the Corinthian Church of Paul's day. Rather than often using the phenomenon as a test of spiritual attainment, they will further expand the doctrine to identify a "secret prayer language" that finds absolutely no basis in Biblical doctrine.

Modern legalism has changed little from that which was found in the Bible's records. The only changes made have been the specifics of what is urged as a "must." Few today will press for the circumcision of male converts, for the Scriptures specifically address this topic. (Acts 15) On the other hand, many other issues are not explicitly mentioned, therefore matters of diet, the use of the "sacred names," keeping (or not keeping) the feast days, and a host of other things are considered by some as not only the marks, but the causative factors, in the life of a true Christian.

As before, in order to avoid legalism we must remember two things:

- 1) The instructions of Yahweh concerning health, diet, the Sabbath, and various other sanctifying practices are for our own good.
- 2) Genuine obedience is from the heart, for justification is by faith, and not the deeds of the law.

Thus, urging an unconverted individual to keep the appointed times, or even to reform the diet, may have some outward benefits due to the law of cause-and-effect, but will do little to save the soul. The Gospel does not consist of food and drink, it does not consist of rituals of feasting and fasting, and it does not consist of acts of obedience. Our focus must ever be on "Him crucified," and all other doctrines will come naturally upon that foundation.

Modern licentiousness is found, as mentioned above, in the Once-Saved-Always-Saved view of the Gospel; but further than this, there may be some who acknowledge that there are actions that a Christian will not or should not commit... yet excuses are made for failure. "We all sin," they say, or "We are only human," as if the divine infusion of Yahshua's grace had no practical (and *infinitely* healing) effect. Excuses imply blame, and blame is only relevant if the "self" is making the attempt at holiness, rather than allowing faith in the power of Yahweh to do its "perfect work." (James 1:3, 4) Some find recourse in the "Don't judge me" standpoint wrongly derived from the narrow reading of Matthew 7:1 that we have already examined,



External Link Note

Articles on tongues:
1) <http://csda.us/binary/essays/etongues.html>
2) <http://csda.us/binary/essays/etongues2.html>

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and still others go through their entire lives believing it is possible to cease from sinning, believing they should cease from sinning, believing they *must* cease from sinning, but finding themselves unable to do so, and living a life filled with guilt and remorse. This is the natural result of licentiousness in one who has a truly sensitive conscience, for the Gospel is never taught as something that does (not just can, should or must) eliminate sin in the life, therefore sanctification remains a goal that appears very close, yet in reality is very far away because of an imperfect belief.

As we go about testing the Spirits, both the messages and the messengers, it is of great importance that we first know what *we* believe, that we first become grounded in our understanding of Scripture. This does not mean that we settle into our doctrines to the extent that we can never change them when new light comes, or that we are not open to being educated further. What it means is that we will have a basis for comparison, the old with the new, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14) This allows us to reach out to others with both confidence and humility as we seek to help our fellow travelers to sing the Song of Moses and The Lamb, (Rev 15:3) of duty and love, works and faith, obedience and grace.

7.5 – Summary

- 1) Christians must exist within a paradox, believing both that they are completely without personal merit, and at the same time worth an infinite ransom to the Creator of the universe.
- 2) An evangelist’s speech must be simple and pure, communicating the truth in love with the right words and to the right audience.
- 3) Evangelism is essentially an invitation to share in a common experience with the Father and Son. It involves revealing the character of the Almighty in our words and actions.
- 4) The mission field begins with the self, then generally moves outward to the home, friends, neighbors, and then the entire world.
- 5) It is important to “test the Spirits” of those who bring us messages, and to use the right criteria to do so.
- 6) Modern errors in doctrine are usually re-statements or refinements of a few original heresies. Learning the truth, and the words of the apostles about these old deceptions, equips us to function confidently in today’s spiritual chaos.
- 7) One must be well grounded in his or her own faith before effective evangelism to others can be consistently useful.

Chapter 8: The End in Sight

Topics: Baptism, The Church Covenant, Going Onward to Perfection, The Work of The Body, the Need for Faith and Knowledge

8.1 – Sacred Vows

If the reader of this guidebook has thus far found his or her beliefs in harmony with the spirit of what is shared, the next step in the unifying of the individual with the Body of Christ, the Nation of the Saved, is baptism. In the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church, as it should be everywhere else, this sacred act is seen as one entailing all the solemnity of a human marriage, and beyond.

The union of two human beings lasts until the conclusion of this age: the death of the body or the change that comes at the return of Yahshua. Baptism, on the other hand, may begin here on earth, but it is designed to represent a transformation of the life of the individual that lasts throughout eternity, for the Kingdom to which we go at the end of our time here “shall not pass away.” (Dan 7:14) It is important, therefore, that the covenant established between Christ and His people be understood in every particular, for just as marriage is never to be considered a restricting or arbitrary agreement, nor to be administered carelessly, so membership in a Church should be one of heartfelt union and unreserved commitment, and commenced only after due consideration and prayer.

Toward the goal of fully understanding the terms of this divine “marriage contract,” the current baptismal vow to which each CSDA member “sets his/her seal,” (*cf.*, Neh 9:38) is presented here, reproduced from the official Church website at <http://csda.us/baptism.html>:

**Creation 7th Day Adventist
BAPTISMAL VOW**

Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. As Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance. I hereby enter that kingdom and declare my allegiance to **YAH**, the Creator and Eternal Father.

In going forward in this most solemn rite I make a public declaration that I am dead to sin (Romans 6:2). I solemnly vow to remain dead to sin, accepting the promise that it shall have no more dominion over me. I have claimed the cleansing from my hereditary and cultivated traits of evil. My mouth shall remain a sanctified mouth, my tongue a converted tongue. I will speak of God's goodness and praise His holy name (Romans 6:14). I have renounced the world and will no longer live in pride and self-indulgence.

I accept Christ's vow to me: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). "I will preserve you from all evil" (Psalms 121:7). "I will guide you into all truth and show you things to come" (John 16:13). "Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto Thee. For Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" (Psalms 56:12, 13)

Following Christ's commission in Matt. 28:19, I am baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"-- being sealed a member of the Royal Family. Henceforth I shall walk in newness of life, loyal and obedient to God and His law. I will bear His sign of obedience and creative power, the Sabbath of the fourth commandment (Ezekiel 20:12) and His sign of humility and dependence for life, the New Moon (Isaiah 66:22, 23; Psalm 81:3,4; Colossians 2:16). I surrender to Him all that I have and pledge myself to serve Him; all of my capabilities shall be given to the work of extending His kingdom. Those who have been baptized can claim the help of the Great Worthies of Heaven to keep them from falling, and to reveal through them a character that is after the Divine similitude.

By my vow of perpetual obedience to **YAH's Word**, I testify before angels and men that I LIVE BY "EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF YAH". (Matthew 4:4). "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day." (2 Timothy 1:12)

"YAH is Our Righteousness."

Candidate's Signature

Witness's Signature

Date

Date

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A comparison between the document above and the true tests of the evangelist outlined in Section 7.4.3.2 will reveal that all the elements of this list are present in the vow.

The first item in the list, that the evangelist will “speak reliable words” is established in the paragraph containing the words, “My mouth shall remain a sanctified mouth, my tongue a converted tongue.” The second item, by which the messenger claims to act on behalf of the Creator is fulfilled near the beginning, “I hereby enter that kingdom and declare my allegiance to YAH, the Creator and Eternal Father,” and “I will speak of God’s goodness and praise His holy name (Romans 6:14).” This seen even more clearly in the statement, “Those who have been baptized can claim the help of the Great Worthies of Heaven to keep them from falling, and to reveal through them a character that is after the Divine similitude.” It is through this revelation of character that acts on behalf of the Almighty are performed.

The third element, that of urging faith and repentance, is covered by the pledge, “all of my capabilities shall be given to the work of extending His kingdom,” for it is by the faith and repentance of the world that this Kingdom is extended. Agreement with the light that has come before is intended in the statement, “I live by ‘every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Yah.’”

Finally, the promotion of the unity of the Body of Christ is revealed in the previously mentioned statement that the time and talents of the convert will be dedicated to expanding the divine kingdom. Further, considering the baptismal vow an “oath of allegiance” is to place a great gulf between membership in this united Body and those catch-it-if-you-can non- or inter-denominational bodies that claim to understand loyalty to Yahshua well enough, but do not extend this principle to the community of saints with nearly as much enthusiasm.

8.2 – The CSDA Seal

The importance of “seals” in the Scriptures is difficult to overstate. Every covenant into which Yahweh and humanity has entered has contained within it a “sign” of its existence and continued validity. Sometimes this seal is visible evidence, as here: “And [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” (Rom 4:11)

Sometimes the seal is invisible, a metaphor, such as here: “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave, the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” (Songs 8:6)

In either case, even with those that were invisible, a visible representation of this agreement is mentioned in the divine record, and this should not be

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applied any less readily to the final Seal placed upon the spiritual Tribes of Israel, of which we read here: “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’ And I heard the number of them which were sealed, and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” (Rev 7:1-4)



Activity Note

Do a word study of the Bible, finding appearances of “seal(s)” and “signet(s)” and examine their meanings.

In another place we read: “And Yahweh said unto [the man clothed in linen], ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.’ And to the others He said in mine hearing, ‘Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children,

and women, but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my Sanctuary.’ Then they began at the ancient men which were before the House.” (Ezek 9:4-6)

In the CSDA Church, the idea of “seals” is reflected in a number of ways. The baptismal vow that we have just seen is a metaphorical “seal” that identifies us as members of the Body of Christ. Our major Church publication, *The CSDA Signet*, has a name that means “The CSDA Seal,” and is subtitled with the verse, “And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, ‘Holiness To Yah.’” (Exodus 28:36) Our members consider our lives to be reflective of the completed testimony that Christ made on our behalf, who has sealed His work for us by the offering of His own blood. Most obvious to the observer, however, is the symbol of the Church (Figure 8.1) as displayed upon the congregation’s building, and upon many of our publications. We will briefly examine the various aspects of this visual representation of the Church.



Figure 8.1 – The CSDA Seal

Every effective seal, even in human business dealings, has the following three characteristics: First, it identifies the origin of that which is sealed: the producer or the creator. Second, it indicates the jurisdiction under which this identifying mark operates. Third, it provides a sign of the authority or power protecting the seal's validity; in human trade this would be a policy number or a product code. In this Church symbol we see a spiritual counterpart or divine application of each of these elements.

The Producer or the Creator of the members of the Divine Kingdom, who receive this seal, (Rev 7:3) is named in the Hebrew letters at the seal's center: Yahweh and Yahshua are the names by which the Godhead are identified. Of course the presence of the Holy Spirit, the third element of the Godhead, is also acknowledged, for It is the presence *of* these Divine Beings. Yet Its lack of unique person-hood is revealed, as we have noted in previous sections, by the lack of an identifying personal name.

The jurisdiction is stated around the edge, that the Almighty is the "Creator of Heaven and Earth." It is certainly true that Satan is considered the "god of this world," (2Cor 4:4) in the sense that he has great authority over its progress and the destiny of its inhabitants. At the same time, the Christians' very presence is a sign to the Dragon that his rule is not absolute, and will have an end. Just as our Father "callesth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom 4:17) in order to bring them about, so the believers give the testimony that "in [the last days] shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." (Dan 2:44) Yahshua declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," (Mat 28:18) because the power of His coming Kingdom has no limitation.

For the saint, who believes that Yahweh "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son," (Col 1:13) His reign over even this darkened earth is already a daily reality, and a daily cause for rejoicing. Further, the statement that "Yah [is] our Righteousness" declares His authority over the lives of individual believers who have offered Him their service; He responds to this by imputing His own righteousness to them because of their faithful commitment.

“He that hath received His testimony,” we are told, “hath set to his seal that God is true.” (John 3:33)

8.3 – The Three Baptisms

During the course of the CSDA Church’s online studies, it was discovered that the Scriptures speak of three “seals” for the believer, (Figure 8.2) each of which is associated with a baptism, and only one of which is by water. The location of the transcripts of these studies are found here:

The Blood Seal: <http://csda.us/binary/newmoons/NMMay06.html>

The Spirit Seal: <http://csda.us/binary/newmoons/NMJun06.html>

The Water Seal: <http://csda.us/binary/newmoons/NMJul06.html>

8.3.1 – The Blood Seal and The Baptism of Repentance

The “Seal of Blood,” involves the baptism of repentance. Of the Israelites’ departure from Egypt we read, “Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, ‘Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For Yahweh will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, Yahweh will pass over the door, and will not suffer the Destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.’” (Exo 12:21-23)



Figure 8.2 – The Three Baptismal Seals

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The Christians are told, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” (1Cor 5:7) It is necessary, in order to receive this baptism, to acknowledge the evil of one’s former life, having been convicted that a life devoid of faith in Yahshua cannot be pleasing in His sight. (Heb 11:6) This is the very first step to conversion that was shared with the Gentiles, who knew little of the true faith: “that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” (Acts 26:20)

8.3.2 – The Spirit Seal and The Baptism of Faith

The second seal is that of the Spirit, and it is a little different from the other two is that, unlike the Blood Seal and the Water Seal, the Spirit seal is broken, not taken, by the believer. We are told in the Word that Water, Blood and the Spirit are witnesses on earth to Yahweh, (1John 5:8) however in certain verses it is made clear the of these three the Spirit witnesses in a different way, as here: “This is He that came by water and blood, even Yahshua the Messiah; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (1John 5:6)

The Spirit seal is, essentially, a “block” placed upon certain concepts in the Scriptures until the correct time for them to be revealed. It is important for humans to know that Yahweh has all things under control, yet it is not always possible for us to handle the entire measure of truth until we are at the proper degree of growth. Such was the case with the prophet Daniel, who stated several times: “I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me; but I kept the matter in my heart.” (Dan 7:15, 28) At the end of his visions he was told, “Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” (Dan 12:9, 13) Paul saw things that he knew were not to be revealed at that time. (2Cor 12:4) John also heard things that were not to be recorded during his experience on Patmos: “And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices I was about to write, and I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, ‘Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.’” (Rev 10:4)

In the time of the end, however, we find Yahshua on the Throne breaking seal after seal, (Rev 6:1-17, Rev 8:1-5) each time unleashing an effect that can be seen by the inhabitants of the earth. At the end of the Revelation, in the very last chapter of the Bible, John is told, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.” (Rev 22:10)

The study of the Spirit is required to overcome the barriers that Yahweh, in His infinite wisdom, has placed upon certain aspects of Truth. This is why there is such a thing as “present truth,” because there are certain messages

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that can only have their proper impact at particular times in human history. At other times that would be ineffective, or even harmful, if uttered.

It takes faith, genuine faith, to receive and convey present truth. It takes faith to understand the doctrines and prophecies, and how they relate to the character of the Almighty that we are revealing to the world. In this way, and in this way only, can we effectively witness, with the blood and the water, to the power of Yahshua as a collective people, the Church.

8.3.3 – The Seal of Water and The Baptism of Testimony

Hopefully, readers have already accomplished the first two baptisms, those of offering repentance and accepting faith. Hopefully this guidebook has had a hand in clarifying, if not facilitating, an understanding of these concepts. As stated at the head of this chapter, the next step after these are accomplished is baptism, and this the Baptism of Testimony with which the great majority of people associate the word. The “Water Seal,” the third of three, is the public revelation of the life’s transformation: worldling to convert, sinner to saint, and “only human” to partaker of “the divine nature.” (2Pet 1:4)

We read, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16) Baptism was something that was entered into joyfully, and *publicly*. The statement, “Religion is a personal thing” has two meanings, one correct and one incorrect. The correct meaning is that every individual has to have a personal understanding of the things he or she believes, and not just accept these things because some other person has told them. (Rom 14:5) The incorrect meaning is that religion is so “personal” that it should not be discussed openly, should not be shared with others... some are even ashamed to declare what they believe to those who ask. Yahshua said just the opposite: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15) Religion, in this sense, is very much not a personal thing, and baptism, as the sign of its acceptance, ought likewise to be a public and open testimony.

Now, as in the introduction to both volumes of *The Highway of Holiness*, it is true that the Book of Acts reveals baptisms taking place very quickly after one hears of the Gospel. Unfortunately, such relatively innocent times as those gave way to a much darker world. It is now the case that to be a “Christian” can mean one of several, very different, things, and there is such a diversity of beliefs among those claiming to follow Christ that you can take almost *any* doctrine and find two Christian groups that say opposite things about it. This was not what Yahweh had in mind! Rather than being content, therefore, with a schizophrenic Bride, or one with multiple personality disorder, the Savior seeks unity in all things relevant to the justification and development of souls for His Church.

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There is a need for education before the Water Seal is taken, and the Baptism of Testimony administered.

Now, is baptism really necessary? Why is it even important, since it is just a “physical” thing? Conversion is a spiritual matter, that is true, but if it does not have Baptism as the outward sign of its occurrence, the process is not complete. We read, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16) Again, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38) Those two verses certainly seem to state that it is necessary, the first using the word “saved,” and the second making it known that we do not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (by which one needs to be born in order to enter the Kingdom – John 3:5-8) until it is done.

Some may say, “Well, it does not say that ‘he that is baptized not shall be damned,’ in the first verse, and it does not say in Acts that baptism is the *only* means of receiving the Spirit. Cornelius and his house (Acts 10) received the Holy Spirit before they went under the water.” The observations made in that statement are true, and worthy of discussion; the conclusions drawn from these observations, however, are unsound. Even worse, they are used for the purpose of lessening the importance that the Bible Itself places upon Baptism as a sacred sign.

The first verse, while not specifying, “He that is baptized not shall be damned” *does* explicitly state that both elements are required for one to be “saved.” Since Protestants do not believe in Purgatory, Limbo or the opportunity to receive the Gospel after death, (Isa 38:18, Heb 9:27) there are really only two options.

Concerning Acts 10, we do find that Cornelius was baptized after receiving evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence, but this is not all that is stated in the text. What we find, as we read, is that he and his household were baptized *immediately* afterward by the command of Peter. (Acts 10:46-48) There was to be no delay after Heaven’s acceptance was so readily revealed. Moreover this was a unique and extraordinary event. The events of Acts 10 were specifically designed to show, dramatically, the acceptance by Yahweh of the Gentiles. The concept of a “universal Kingdom” including all the nations was entirely new light to this earliest Christian community, and it required an divine “seal of approval” in order to convince the more conservative-minded of the brethren, (Acts 11:1-18) a factor emphasized at length in the Scriptures.

Clearly, it is not to be understood that Baptism is necessary if there is no *possible* way to safely administer it. The thief on the cross, for example, (Luke 23:39-42) could not have been expected to undergo a baptismal ceremony. This was another unique situation like that described in Acts 10, however; in the vast majority of cases, and as a principle, the “requisite

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steps” for conversion are rightly stated as outlined in Section 2.4 of Volume 1: Repentance, Faith, and finally Baptism. This ritual should be administered to every believer if it is at all possible.

Simply stated, faith is a spiritual matter. On the other hand, if there are no “works” associated with this spiritual state, we may know with assurance that the faith is false. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” (James 2:17) The Scriptures say that, “the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.” (Mat 16:27) It is important, however, to realize that there is a difference between being rewarded “according to your works” and “because of your works.” If we have true faith, our works will correspond to that faith, and our reward will be “according” to those works, but because of that faith. The Water Seal, as a physical act reflecting a spiritual truth, is actually a sign that we understand this principle.

Those who hear the Gospel in these last days, understanding the need for education, and the subtlety of Satan’s deceptions, must strive for a balance between their zeal and their state of peace. Baptism is important, and for those not yet members of the Body of Christ it should be considered the major objective of one’s life. As the visible sign of one’s acceptance by both Heaven and Its representatives on earth, (Mat 18:18) the Scriptures make it plain that it is one of Yahweh’s requirements for a life that pleases Him. At the same time, it would be better to have never been baptized at all than to take upon one’s self the sacred vows of the divine marriage only to be found untrue. Infidelity before marriage, unless force was employed, was a less grievous crime than adultery in ancient Israel, (Deu 22:28, 29, 22) as today, and we find a spiritual counterpart as it pertains to the Church.

Let these things be carefully considered by those contemplating this union.

8.4 – The Watery Grave and Beyond

There is a point to be made in that water baptism was called “baptism of repentance,” in a few places like Luke 3:3. In the wording of this book we are considering repentance itself – the act of acknowledging one’s guilt – as a kind of counterpart to that baptism. The reason for this is that we find “the baptism of repentance” as the term is used in the Bible, or “the baptism of John,” as it was also called, (Mark 11:30) was not enough. It quickly gave way to something else that Christians were to accept as doctrine.

Some, who had been baptized by John’s “baptism of repentance” had not been educated about a very important element of truth at the time of their initial conversion, and of such we read: “Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples he said unto them, ‘Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?’ And they said unto him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.’ And he said unto them, ‘Unto what then were ye baptized?’ And

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they said, ‘Unto John’s baptism.’ Then said Paul, ‘John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Yahshua.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Yahshua.” (Acts 19:1-5)

In the days *before* the Cross it was necessary only to repent of one’s sins and submit to John’s teachings about the coming Messiah in order to enter the water. This was, however, only a foreshadowing of the divine revelation that was quickly to follow, it was to prepare those who heard him to accept the full teaching and ministry of the Redeemer. It was for this reason that the Baptist said of Yahshua, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30) Thereafter, all who heard about Christ’s death and resurrection, (Rom 10:9) and the subsequent gift of the Holy Spirit to mankind (Acts 2:38) were required to believe these things also. Repentance, it became clear, was only the first step – faith was then to be exercised in order to accept the miracles of the crucifixion and beyond. This was the baptism with the Holy Spirit that John the Baptist said was yet to come in the days of His ministry. (Mat 3:11)

It is enough to have membership in the Body of Christ. Some, who understand this to a degree, state it thus: “The Church does not save you, Jesus saves you.” Here, as before, the observation is true but the application unsound. It is true that the Church, and membership therein, saves no-one, but those who are saved by Christ will seek such membership as a matter of course, for it is written, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Rom 8:9) To be “of His” means just this: “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” (Rom 12:5) To have that “spirit of Christ,” we are informed, means to have “liberty,” (2Cor 3:17) but in the truly faithful this liberty is not used to be “free” of other Christians! Fellowship is an important part of sanctification, “without which no man shall see the Lord,” (Heb 10:25, 12:14) therefore we are required, after baptism, to seek both fellowship and the refining experiences this brings.

There is life beyond the Water Grave in Heaven, yes, but that life begins here on earth. (1Pet 1:22, 23) The New Testament epistles contain practical advice for those who have entered into the Body of Christ, (*e.g.*, James 2:8) and it is the duty of every member to continue his or her education in these sacred things, and to diligently apply them to the life that awaits glorification at the return of the Son of Man.

8.5 – The Work of The Church (Three Angels in Acts)

One of the “practical” things the Church is to do, as a Body, is to stand for truth. Individual members, in their personal lives, are to show forth a testimony of Christian grace and firm adherence to divine principles. This translates, as we look at the big picture, to a unified body of believers with a

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common testimony who will not allow social injustices to pass without comment, or without protest.

The “Protestants,” who came out from the darkness and arbitrary control of apostate Roman Catholicism (which had, indeed, begun as the conduit of light to the earth) found themselves in the necessary position of crying out against both the religious and secular evils of their day. The two, in those times, were connected often enough. It is important here to point out that the Roman Catholic Church did begin as a pure and holy organization, because we find the same principle acting in every generation of believers. While it is certainly the case that Yahshua said, “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against His Church, (Mat 16:18) this was never to be used as license for apostasy, because the same promises and greater were made to the Hebrew nation from which the Kingdom was taken. (Mat 21:43)

As long as the Church is faithful to its commission, the protection of Heaven holds. If, however, as we saw in Volume 1, a Church apostatizes and then forms a union with the worldly powers (thus, rejecting Christ as a husband) there is inevitably a separation of the sheep from the goats, with the goats (never the sheep) remaining stagnant in the formerly faithful group. Seventh-day Adventists see this happening with the Jewish Nation, the Roman Catholic organization, and the Sunday keeping Protestant groups of former times. Today, we see another call to separate, according to the principles of the Word, drawing us from all churches that have followed in the paths of their older “sisters.” (Ezek 23:1-49)

The job of the protestant Church is to expand the borders of Yahshua’s Kingdom by winning souls to the truth. This work, as we have seen in *The Highway of Holiness* Volume 1, is sometimes identified as the Three Angels’ Message of Revelation 14. We have read a record of Peter’s activities in Acts 2, in which he was preaching under inspiration to the Jews from every nation under Heaven, taking them through the steps of repentance, faith and then baptism. We will see, further, that this work did involve the three angels after laying the proper foundation.

This is the passage, which we have seen earlier in our studies, but repeat here for fresh emphasis. The principles Peter expounds will be identified in [brackets] so that the information being presented to those hearing the Gospel for the first time will be made plain, and that the job of the Church in these last days will be recognized as the job of the Church at its very earliest inception:

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Yahshua of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, [Note: this is “corporate

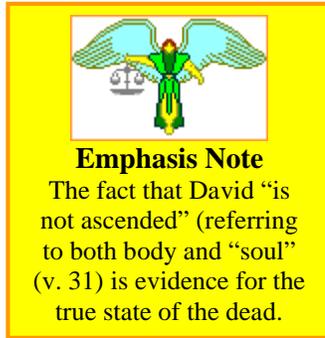
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accountability”] whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

“For David speaketh concerning him, ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand that I should not be moved; therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad. Moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.’

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. [*Note: Since David is dead, Paul says, and still in the grave, his words have an obvious future application to Another*]. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.

This Yahshua hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the Heavens; but he saith himself, ‘Yahweh said unto my Lord, “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Yahshua, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:22-37)



We read of the reaction and subsequent teachings: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’

“Then Peter said unto them, ‘Repent, [*Note: This is **Repentance**, indicated by the **First Angel** – Rev 14:6, 7]* and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.’ And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation.’ [*Note: This is departure from Babylon, as identified by the **Second Angel** – Rev 14:8 – which requires **Faith** in the new light]*

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread,

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and in prayers. [Note: This is unifying in the truth by means of the public testimony of **Baptism**, and standing against error as indicated by the **Third Angel** – Rev 14:9-12 – which requires avoiding the “mark of the beast,” the power of Satan through human nations and individuals] And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” (Acts 2:38-45)

For details on how the Three Angels apply to Repentance, Faith and Baptism, and how they apply additionally to the concepts of Victory over Sin, Purity of Doctrine and Unity of Faith, the reader may review Chapter 2.3 of this guidebook’s first volume.

The emphasis here is that the work of the Church has *never* changed, not from that day of Peter’s sermon on Pentecost to this very hour. The only things that have changed are the faces of the deceptions that Satan employs to distract humanity from the important business of preparing for Heaven, and the precise emphasis the Church must place on the Good News for the needs of the people in that present age. The wording of the sermons may reflect this, but the essential content will ever be the presentation of Christ to the world, and the things necessary to benefit from His ministry and unite with His divine Spirit.

8.6 – A Kingdom of Priests

In Chapter 5.5, the role of the individual believer is discussed, focusing primarily on internal Church activities like voting, and mentioning some external functions such as evangelism. The role of the Body, the collective of believers, is similar in many respects to the role of its individuals, but we are given something of a “broader view” when looking at the Church as a whole.

We read, “Ye [a plural ‘you’] are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” (Mat 5:13a, 14-16)

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Yahshua the Messiah.” (1Peter 2:5)

The instructions to the believers as a whole appear to involve two primary functions, these being Evangelism and Intercession. We have discussed Evangelism at some length in Chapter 7, and again in the above section, but said little so far in terms of intercession. As the light of the world, we have

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the responsibility to reveal knowledge of the divine world to those who live on a sin-darkened planet. As the salt of the earth, our work preserves a creation that is “dead in trespasses and sins.” (Eph 2:1)

The intercessory role of the Church finds its antitype in the work of the Old Testament priests. We read of them, “Then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto Yahweh, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance; and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto Yahweh, and their sin offering before Yahweh, for their ignorance.” (Num 15:24, 25)

We read here that sins committed in ignorance (willful sins were punished by death or exile in the Old Testament, and would require an entire conversion or re-conversion under the New Covenant) required a community sacrifice with a priest facilitating. In the New Testament record we find the Church performing similar functions: “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of Yahweh. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and Yahweh shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” (James 5:14-18)

While no “young bullock” is offered, (for, as Peter notes, the sacrifices are now spiritual in nature) the principle is unchanged. The elders pray over the afflicted, and health restored, but further still, the sins that are confessed and forsaken are forgiven also. We find in verse 16 that, although “elders” are initially mentioned, the work of comfort, encouragement and facilitating atonement is not limited to those working in an “official” capacity. Just as Elijah had great power over the material world because of his faith, and his ability to work within the will of the Almighty, so may any believer take hold of this authority; and when working as a united Body, great things may be accomplished.



Figure 8.3 – The Gems of Witness

We read of the High Priest’s garments under the previous Covenant: “And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; [...] Foursquare it shall be being doubled; [...] And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle; this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.” (Exo 28:15-21)

We recall the importance of “signets,” or “seals” in the covenants of Yahweh. The breastplate of judgment (Figure 8.3) was designed as a memorial to each tribe, a visible symbol that the intercessory work performed by the high priest was on behalf of every son of Israel.



Instructor Note

Your study partner can share with you the details of the New Moon ceremony, and the Agape Feast that follows it.

As priests after the order of our own High Priest, Yahshua the Messiah, (Heb 9:11) we find that the Body both receives and facilitates intercession, not only for the world, but also the continuance and expansion of the Church itself. This is indicated in the vows of the Church listed earlier, specifically, “all of my capabilities shall be given to the work of extending His kingdom.” One of the benefits of the New Moon ceremony, in which all baptized members

may participate, is that it reminds the convert of his continuing dependence upon the Savior, keeping at bay any temptation that there is any personal merit in the individual that could illuminate the earth. The work certainly involves shedding light into dark places, but the source of that light comes directly from the Creator, of which the faithful Christian is but a reflection.

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As a people, as a Church, as a Kingdom of Priests, our job involves teaching the truth to the world and bringing the lost into the Fold. It involves, further, applying our prayers, time and talents to the ongoing work of the Church, the “spiritual Tribes” of Israel, (Rev 7:1-4) that errors may be dispelled, demons withstood, and truth revealed and accepted. This is an extremely important function of the Church, to pray for its own success, for we read, “And all things, whatsoever ye [plural] shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” (Mat 21:22, 1John 3:22) Those who love the brethren and those captive to the world, will leave no request unmade for the safety and success of the Bride of Yahshua the Messiah.

8.7 – Critically Examined

8.7.1 – Faith, Membership and Previous Associations

We have a perfect Savior. We look forward to a perfect Inheritance in the world to come. We are told there is a “perfect work” that is taking place within us due to the ministry of Yahshua. (James 1:4) We are told, moreover, to *be* perfect, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Mat 5:48) Naturally, this does not mean we are told we must know everything and never err in judgment due to ignorance or inexperience. What it does mean, however, is that in all that we know, in all that we are convicted is right, we are to perfectly fill that spiritual role to which we are appointed. The very Word of God tells us we may do this, and it takes only “faith as a grain of mustard seed” (Mat 17:20) to move the very mountains should they stand in our way.



Instructor Note

You may discuss the overall themes of the questions used in baptismal examinations with your study partner.

But how deeply does the new convert truly believe this? It is one thing to say, “Oh, yes, I am sure Yahweh will provide.” It is another thing to say, “I *know* that all things will work together for good in my life,” and to receive the blessing of that promise with a sense of perfect peace. It is this spiritual knowledge – this implicit trust – that renders a man or woman a settled member of the Body of Christ, not mere knowledge of doctrines or ecclesiastical history.

These latter things are important, of course, and the role of the believer cannot be properly undertaken without them, but conversion and justification involves primarily this: a perfect trust, a perfect faith, in the authority of the Father and the ministry of the Son. (John 17:3)

What follows is a recounting of the baptismal procedure of the Creation Seventh-day Adventist Church. The actual questions asked of the applicants are not included in the guidebook (they are found in an appendix of the Instructors’ Version) because they are to be honestly considered, and

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honestly answered, not researched for the “right” answer. There is no “new” teaching revealed by the questions, no secrets to be revealed, only an inquiry into the spiritual state of the one requesting baptism and membership. There are few if any questions about *doctrine* at all for, as stated above, it is the trust that develops as the result of truly accepting the Savior that leads to that “perfect work” of conversion. Further, it should be expected that one asking for baptism in the CSDA Church would have had contact with the members, or read this book, and therefore knows well enough the beliefs and teachings of the Body.

A note should be said first about the significance with which this commitment is to be contemplated. Just as a man cannot have two wives under the proper spiritual conditions, (Rom 7:1-3) and Christ Himself is certainly no polygamist, but is “one flesh” with His Bride, (Eph 5:31, 32) so we find an application here. It is requested that, inasmuch as it is possible, the applicant for baptism in the Church revoke his or her previous associations with other religious organizations. In Heaven there is a “Book of Life” that contains the names of all the saved, (Rev 21:27) and under the Old Covenant there was a list of families that “sealed” to the covenant in Jerusalem. (Neh 9:38) Some may say, “In the Old Testament they kept a record of names, but the Book of Life is our record of names in Heaven. There is no need for consistent membership roles here on earth.”

It is true that we do have a spiritual list of names in Heaven, but while the New Testament says we are to avoid biological “genealogies,” (Titus 3:9) we are also told that all things are to be done “in earth, as it is in Heaven.” (Mat 6:10) The agreement to admit new members is done on earth, (Mat 18:19) and we discover that even in those relatively pure times, there was often the need for “letters” to identify the true messengers from the false. (2Th 3:17, Acts 15:23, 2Th 2:2, 1Cor 16:3)

Just as in the Book of Acts the apostles saw a need for a higher level of organization in order to facilitate the smooth and effective operation of the Church, (Acts 6:1-7) so we find that while “letters of commendation” are not necessary, (2Cor 3:1) a record of members that are free from other commitments to churches and religious societies is beneficial, serving as a visible “stone of witness” that the Scriptures repeatedly reveal. (Josh 24:27)

“There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling,” (Eph 4:4) we are told, and just as the believers in Acts 19 received a new baptism when learning the full measure of truth, so those of other organizations are expected – upon accepting a more complete knowledge of the truth – will turn fully toward the Body that teaches the undiluted, uncorrupt Gospel to the world.

To this end, the following procedure is performed:

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8.7.2 – The CSDA Baptismal Procedure

- 1) The Candidate is called before the present members, and the basic examination questions are asked with as little “leading” as possible. The Candidates may be asked to qualify or expound upon what they have said in order to get a clear picture in the minds of all the questioners.
- 2) The members may ask of the applicant any other questions that they have in mind.
- 3) The candidate is sent out of the room. If a voting member believes that an available witness may be beneficial, such as a person who has known and interacted with the candidate, this individual may be called in to give a testimony.
- 4) The members take a primary vote. Possible votes from members are *Yes*, *No*, or *Don't Know*. If the candidate is uniformly accepted or rejected for baptism, (see Table 5.1 for assessment) skip to step 7.
- 5) If there are *Don't Know* votes among the members, and they believe that their vote may be swayed one way or the other by further questioning or conversation, the candidate can be recalled (or a witness presented) and asked to provide additional input.
- 6) The candidate and/or summoned witnesses are sent away and a final vote is taken.
- 7) The candidate is recalled and informed of the final voting results.
- 8) The candidate may ask questions of voting members either individually or as a group.

8.7.3 – Re-examination and re-baptism

Should a candidate for baptism have already been rejected on at least one previous occasion, or should a baptismal candidate have once been a member who was disfellowshipped, an additional step is added to the baptismal procedure. Before the voting members are called for the examination of the re-applicant, the candidate must bring at least two reliable witnesses in favor of his or her acceptance as a member. These witnesses may be from among the current Church Body, or family and community members accepted as reliable at the discretion of the voting Church members. Note that Church members called as witnesses would thus be going into the re-examination with a default *Yes* vote for the individual, but are not bound to it as a final vote should new information come to light during the course of the questioning.

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A candidate who has formerly been a member must undergo the same procedure as a new applicant, but the questions asked might be different than the basic set, depending on the circumstances.

8.8 – A Final Word

There is little that is more damaging to the reputation of Christ and His church than the ignorant Christian. While we are told that it is not necessary to be wise in the ways of the world, (1Cor 3:19, Rom 16:19) we are nevertheless instructed, “be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (Mat 10:16) “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, *apt to teach*, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” (2Tim 2:24-26) Thus, the knowledge of spiritual things is an absolute necessity for the work of Yahweh’s people.

Those that follow the truth merely because of some other person’s authority, because of tradition, or because of the teachings of parents and their community, cannot be effective and powerful ministers of the Gospel. Each must touch Yahweh for himself or herself, and this is done best by means of prayer, study and fellowship with those of like faith. Victory over sin, purity of doctrine, and unity of members allows us to stand firm in the face of opposition, temptation and apostasy, protesting evil while accepting and rejoicing in the goodness of Yahweh toward His children. There is much cause for joy, even in the darkest of times, and understanding this leads to a “Sabbath rest” for which it is said of those who find it, “I have set Yahweh always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” (Psalm 16:8)

Trusting in the leading of the Almighty makes our walk along the Highway of Holiness joyful, exciting and secure. It is that perfect trust in the promises of the Creator and the Redeemer that provides a successful journey, and that successful journey is what makes us Christians; that successful journey is what makes us saints; that successful journey is what makes us Creation Seventh Day Adventists.

8.9 – Summary

- 1) Church membership is a “divine marriage” between the human and the divine, with vows as significant and solemn. Baptism is the public declaration of this marriage, and is required for all, should the circumstances allow it.
- 2) The baptismal vows of the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church allows the convert an occasion to testify to agreement with the Biblical principles of what identifies one of the redeemed.

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- 3) The “Seal” of the CSDA Church identifies the Creator as Yahweh, the jurisdiction of His Kingdom as “Heaven and Earth,” and the mark of His authority as His righteousness imputed to the lives of His people.
- 4) Repentance, Faith and a public Baptism by water are necessary for membership, each constituting a kind of “seal,” a kind of “baptism,” signifying the approval of Yahweh and His people.
- 5) While Church membership saves no individual, it is nevertheless a visible indicator of unity with the people of Yahweh for whom the Son is returning.
- 6) The work of the Church involves teaching the Everlasting Gospel, (Rev 14:6) and interceding for both the world and the Church itself.
- 7) Since baptism is as serious a commitment as a marriage, candidates are expected (inasmuch as it is possible) to revoke their formal associations with previous ecclesiastical organizations.
- 8) The baptismal procedure of the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church is designed to test faith and spiritual qualities to a greater extent than the details of Church doctrine.
- 9) Individual faith and individual knowledge are absolutely essential for a successful Christian life.

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GENERAL APPENDIX – Further Reading

Further reading on the subjects presented in both volumes of *The Highway of Holiness* may be found at the following locations:

The Two Temples

(A Christian Workbook)

<http://www.csda.us/binary/books/TwoTemples/ttt.html> (HTML file)

<http://www.csda.us/binary/books/TwoTemples/TTT.doc> (MS Word file)

<http://www.csda.us/binary/books/TwoTemples/TTT.pdf> (PDF file)

<http://www.csda.us/spanish/LDT/ldt.html> (HTML file - Spanish version)

A Sure Covenant

(Church Membership: Is It Important? Is It Biblical?)

<http://www.csda.us/binary/books/ASC/asc.html> (HTML file)

<http://www.csda.us/binary/books/ASC/ASC.doc> (MS Word file)

<http://www.csda.us/binary/books/ASC/ASC.pdf> (PDF file)

Crucified Afresh!

(The CSDA Position Paper)

http://csda.us/download/Crucified_Afresh_2004.doc (MS Word file)

http://csda.us/download/Crucified_Afresh_2004.pdf (PDF file)

Finally... Out of Darkness, Into His Marvelous Light

(The Mystery: Once Hidden, Now Revealed)

<http://www.csda.us/download/Finally.pdf> (PDF File)

Paper versions of the online resources listed above may be obtained directly from The Creation Seventh Day (and) Adventist Church at no charge. For obtaining this above material, or a full catalogue of resources, please contact:

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1162 Old Highway 45 South
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