

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 193
LEGALISM AND “RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH”

Part one of a two-parts series

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LEGALISM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

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*** BED AND BREAKFAST IN LONDON, ENGLAND****HOW TO CONTACT THE CENTER FOR CANCER CARE IN GOSHEN, INDIANA THAT TREATED MY CANCER**

Two days following my 69th birthday, I learned that I had advanced-stage colon cancer requiring immediate surgery. Later I was told that the cancer had spread to the liver, infesting 90% of the organ and making its prognosis bleak. Several oncologists that I consulted, confirmed that I had Stage 4 terminal liver cancer, with only a few months to live. All what they could do was to prolong my life with chemotherapy for a few months or a year at best. No Cancer Center, including Loma Linda Cancer Center, had a clinical trial program for liver cancer. The impression I received is that nothing could be done to heal my cancer: I was doomed to die in a few months, at most a year.

Driven by my faith in God and optimistic attitude, I sought another opinion at the Goshen Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana, which is located only one hour away from Andrews University, where I live. Following a two-hour consultation with Dr. Seza Gulec, a pioneer in the field of nuclear oncology, I learned that my cancer was terminal but treatable with a combined strategy of chemotherapy and microsphere embolization – a treatment unavailable at other cancer centers. Within one month, the innovative treatment reduced the presence of liver cancer by almost 80% and decreased total tumor volume from 2435cc to 680cc. Within two months, two more treatments reduced my cancer by 95%.

Today I feel like a new man with a new lease on life. I feel like an old car with a decent body and a brand new motor. I have more energy than I have ever had in my life. I can only thank God for His providential leading to the right place and for using the latest research to restore my health.

Click here to see the pictures of the various stages of my cancer:
www.biblicalperspectives.com/goshen

Pushing Technology Further than Imagined

While at the Goshen Center for Cancer Care, I participated in an unprecedented clinical trial using the combined strategy to treat my colorectal

cancer that had advanced to the liver. Placed directly into the cancerous area via catheter, the microspheres delivered 40 times more radiation directly into the tumor than conventional therapy alone, eradicating it over a period of weeks. This targeted therapy aggressively attacked the tumors, quickly reducing their size, while normal liver tissue remained relatively unaffected.

The Goshen Center for Cancer Care is one of the few treatment facilities in the world to offer this breakthrough technology primarily due to the commitment of Dr. Gulec. A world-renowned physician, Dr. Gulec has dedicated years to research and develop the combination therapy, which greatly increases survival rates in those with advanced types of cancer. He has also authored landmark publications in lymphatic mapping, sentinel node biopsy, radioguided surgery and radionuclide therapy. Dr. Gulec currently leads the endocrine surgery, hepatic oncology, molecular imaging and positron emission tomography programs at the Goshen Center for Cancer Care.

Truly I can say that I believe that the Lord providentially placed me in contact with Dr. Gulec, who has done for me what appeared to be impossible. The Lord has used Dr. Gulec to give me a new lease on life. He is so proud of my recovery that he uses me as a show case at international nuclear oncological conferences. Now I feel like a new man energized to serve the Lord in a greater way in the sunset years of my life. Somehow I feel that I have more energy now than I had at 25 years of age.

Patient Oriented Center for Cancer Care

The Goshen Center for Cancer Care is home to some of the world’s most sought after cancer specialists who use ground-breaking research, state-of-the-art technology and patient-specific clinical trials to offer the most advanced treatments available anywhere. Incorporating conventional and alternative medicine, our multidisciplinary, integrated team of physicians, surgeons and specialists work together every day to provide unmatched care all under one roof.

What has impressed me about the Goshen Center for Cancer Care is their patient-oriented focus. Among other things they provide very comfortable free guest rooms facilities. They offer our a holistic approach to healing which addresses the emotional, spiritual, mental, as well as physical as-

pects of cancer. From relentlessly recruiting some of the brightest minds in cancer to pushing current treatments further than ever imagined, everything they do is for the betterment of their patients.

To find our more about the GOSHEN CENTER FOR CANCER CARE, click at these links:

CONTACT: www.cancermidwest.com/contact/contact.asp

WEBSITE: www.cancermidwest.com/

MORE ABOUT DR. GULEC: <http://www.cancermidwest.com/main.asp?id=217>

POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL? AN UPDATE

The research and writing of the new book *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* is proceeding well. In the last newsletter last part of chapter 7 on “Mariology.” Currently I am working on chapter 8, “SPEAKING IN TONGUES.” This is an incredible phenomenon of the past century that is contributing to an unprecedented church growth among Pentecostal and a host of charismatic churches.

According to *Wikipedia*, “Pentecostalism was estimated to number around 115 million followers worldwide in 2000. “The size of Pentecostalism in the U.S. is estimated to be more than 20 million,” that is 20 times larger than the Adventist Church. The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement is growing more than four times faster that the Adventist Church.

Most Pentecostals believe that a person needs to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and then receive the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit is necessary for salvation and is accompanied by speaking in tongues. In view of the fundamental importance attached to speaking in tongues, as a proof of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I decided to include this chapter in the forthcoming book *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?*

Fortunately I found excellent research done by Adventist and non-Adventist scholars. The book that I highly recommend is *Speaking in Tongues: Biblical Speaking in Tongues and Contemporary Glossolalia*, by Gerhard F. Hasel (1935-1994). In my view he was the most outstanding Adventist scholar and prolific writer our Adventist Church has ever

produced. He wrote over 20 books and scores of scholarly articles. Several of his books are still used as standard text-books in numerous theological seminaries.

The ground-breaking research by Hazel and other scholars, will facilitate enormously the writing of my chapter on “The Speaking in Tongues.” By God’s grace I am aiming at completing this chapter within the next two weeks. The final two chapters most likely will deal with the popular beliefs of ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED and PAPAL PRIMACY.

My goal is complete this project by the end of March. I am devoting every spare moment to researching and writing the remaining chapters. Your encouragement has meant a lot to me. Two months ago I suggested that I may shelf the project for a time, especially because the new ministry I started with Cristina Piccardi, took a lot of my time in processing all the invitations we are receiving from across the USA and overseas.

But your letters caused me to reconsider my priorities. Some have reminded me that our Adventist Church desperately need *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* to witness to people who want to know why their beliefs are unbiblical and our Adventist beliefs are biblical. The many pre-publical orders I have already received, have strengthen my determination to complete this project by the end of March 2008.

PRE-PUBLICATION OFFER OF *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL*

Having completed 7 of the 10 chapters of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical*, I can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. By God’s grace, I plan to complete the remaining three chapters by the end of March. They will deal with SPEAKING IN TONGUES, ONCE SAVED ALWAYS SAVED, and PAPAL PRIMACY. These chapters will NOT be posted in our Endtime Issues newsletters. The reason is obvious. Posting all the chapters, diminishes the interest to buy the book when it comes out.

The book, **consisting of about 400 pages with a nice four colors, laminated cover.** At this time I would like to offer our readers the opportunity to place an order at the special **pre-publication price by mailing your order by check postdated March 31, 2008. If you prefer to pay**

by credit card, feel free to email me your name, address, and credit card number, with the instruction: do not process until the mailing of the book

PLEASE NOTE THAT NO CHECK OR CREDIT CARD WILL BE PROCESSED UNTIL THE SHIPMENT OF THE BOOK EXPECTED FOR THE BEGINNING OF APRIL. This means that your check or credit card information will be placed in a special folder, awaiting the release of the book. As soon as the book is out your check will be deposited and your credit card will be processed.

Your advanced order will offer me, not only the encouragement needed to complete this very demanding project, but also an approximate idea of how many copies we should print. Thank you for your encouragement and support.

SPECIAL PRE-PUBLICATION PRICES FOR QUANTITY ORDERS OF *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?*

1 copy of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$30.00 per copy, AIR-MAIL postage paid to any overseas destination.

10 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$10.00 per copy, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$30.00. (\$100.00 for 10 copies). Add \$40.00 for AIRMAIL shipment overseas.

30 copies (one case) of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$5.00 per copy, postage paid. (\$150.00 for 30 copies). Add \$80.00 for AIRMAIL shipment overseas.

100 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$4.00 per copy, postage paid. (\$400.00 for 100 copies). Add \$160.00 for AIRMAIL shipment overseas.

NOTE: The US Postal Service no longer offers overseas surface mail, which took several months delivery. All overseas shipments are now done by airmail, which is expensive, but fast and reliable.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT

Many of you emailed me very encouraging messages which re-kindled my enthusiasm to complete this project as soon as possible. You urged me to proceed without delay because this book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* is urgently needed to help many sincere believers to understand why their popular beliefs are unbiblical and why the Adventist beliefs are biblical.

Some of you have sent in contributions toward this project, which will make it possible to discount substantially the price of the book for quantity orders. If the Lord impresses you to contribute to this project, I am pleased to inform you that now we can offer you a tax deductible receipt, because our son, Daniel, an Architect, has just received a non-profit status for his MASTER’S BUILDERS INC. He has established this organization to channel funds to build churches and schools in developing countries. Your contribution should be sent to this mail and address:

MASTER’S BUILDERS INC.
4990 APPIAN WAY
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN 49103

Your prayers and financial support for this new book is greatly appreciated. If sufficient funds come in to cover the cost of printing it, our plan is to charge only for the cost of mailing. Note, however, that the cost of mailing a 400 pages book by Priority Mail is \$4.95. This means that the special pre-publication prices for quantity orders are already incredibly low.

THE SABBATH SEMINAR WITH WORDS AND SONGS

After weeks of preparation, the SABBATH SEMINAR WITH WORDS AND SONGS was presented and recorded on November 16-17, 2007, at the Avon Park SDA Church, a 900 members congregation near Orlando, Florida. The church was packed with visitors from the surrounding churches. The response surpassed our fondest expectations.

In the past I presented my *Sabbath, Advent, and Lifestyle Seminars* by myself with my broken Italian accent. But now, providentially the Lord has brought to my ministry a most gifted Brazilian lady, Cristina Piccardi,

who touches the hearts of people with her powerful and passionate singing.

During the past five Sabbaths, Cristina has sung at rallies in Avon Park (near Orlando), Loma Linda, Hinsdale (Chicago), San Antonio, (Texas), and Lexington (Kentucky). In Lexington we ministered to about 400 non-SDA sabbatarians, who came from different parts of the USA and Canada. Everywhere our seminars with words and songs, were warmly received.

This is what Pastor Paul Boling, the Senior Pastor of the Avon Park SDA Church, wrote about our SABBATH SEMINAR WITH WORDS AND SONGS, that was recorded at his church on November 16-17, 2007.

“November 18-2007

Over the past years I have had the privilege of inviting Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi to speak at 2 churches that I have pastored. So, I was eager to again host his seminar in the Avon Park SDA Church, of Florida Conference.

However, the weekend visit of November 16-17, 2007 was slated to be different, because he was bringing his own guest singer, Cristina Piccardi. This gifted vocalist added immeasurably to Dr. Bacchiocchi's timely lectures. *She is extremely well trained, and she graciously brought to our congregation the most beautiful music we have ever heard, coupled with her love for God.* Our congregation was so overjoyed with her concert, and they want the team of Bacchiocchi and Piccardi to return soon!”

Pastor Paul Boling
Senior Pastor
Avon Park Seventh-day Adventist Church

Who is Cristina Piccardi?

Truly I can say that Cristina is by far the best Adventist soprano I have heard in my life. Surprisingly she is a slim, only 118 pounds, 5.6 feet high—not the typical heavy-set soprano. When my wife asked her:

“How can you project such a powerful voice when you are so slim?” She replied: “It is God’s gift.”

Cristina was born in Brazil 26 years ago and came to Andrews University two years ago to accompany her husband who is studying at the seminary. She has earned degrees in voice performance both in Brazil and at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA, where she received full scholarship during the two years of her studies, graduating in December of 2005.

In the same year she performed in a leading role with symphonic orchestras in the USA and overseas. At the annual 2005 International Competition for Opera Singers she won the first prize as the best soprano singer of the year. Now that Pavarotti has passed away, it is encouraging to know that one of the best soprano in the world belongs to the Adventist Church.

I officially met Cristina on October 6, 2007 at Andrews University Pioneer Memorial Church. I was spellbound by the three sacred songs she sung during the communion service led by Pastor Dwight Nelson. When we met after the communion service, we both immediately felt that the Lord was bringing us together in a providential way to proclaim with words and songs our timely Adventist Message. She told me that after singing for five years in a leading role with various symphonic orchestras, she felt the call of God to leave glitzy world of the opera stage, in order to dedicate the gift of her voice to sing sacred music. This means that now we are presenting together with words and songs my powerpoint seminars on the SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, and CHRISTIAN LIFE STYLE.

You can enjoy a preview of Cristina’s outstanding singing by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cristina/> She sings the first stanza of THE HOLY CITY.

SPECIAL OFFER of the New DVD Album on the SABBATH WITH WORDS AND SONGS

To make it possible for many fellow believers and especially small churches, to benefit from the newly released DVD Album on the SABBATH WITH WORDS AND SONGS recorded on November 16-17, 2007, we are pleased to offer you the Album for only \$30.00, instead

of the regular price of \$100.00. The price is valid until January 31, 2008, and includes the airmail cost to any oversea destination.

The DVD Album consists of 3 DVD disks containing a total of 6 hours of recording, that is, the Cristina singing and my preaching done on Friday evening, Sabbath morning, and Sabbath afternoon.

The Friday evening program begins with Cristina’s mini Sacred Concert, and is followed by my testimony entitled “My Search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University. This is a gripping testimony delivered with 100 powerpoint slides. I share how the Lord opened the door for me to research and publish my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* at a Vatican University in Rome and since then to share the message of the Sabbath in many countries.

On Sabbath morning Cristina leads the Praise Songs and then she sings “The Lord’s Prayer” before my sermon. My powerpoint sermon “The Sabbath as a Time for Service,” offers practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to gain a greater blessing out of it.

The Sabbath afternoon program is divided into two parts. In the first part Cristina offers a sacred concert and in the second part I deliver my final lecture entitled “The Sabbath Under Crossfire.” This lecture offers an update report on the latest Sabbath/Sunday developments.

You can enjoy this informative and inspiring 6 hours seminar in the privacy of your home or church, without having to travel long distances or investing money to fly us in.

How to Order the New DVD Album on THE SABBATH WITH WORDS AND SONGS at the SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER of only \$30.00 (instead of \$100.00) until December 31, 2007.

(1) **Online** by clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=26&products_id=104

(2) **By calling us** at (269) 471-2915

(3) **By emailing us** your address and credit card information

(4) **By mailing** a check for \$30.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA.

We guarantee to AIRMAIL the DVD album immediately to ensure that it will reach you without delay

WOULD YOU LIKE US TO PRESENT A SEMINAR WITH WORDS AND SONGS AT YOUR CHURCH?

Would you like us to present a SABBATH, or ADVENT, or LIFESTYLE SEMINAR with WORDS AND SONGS at your church? Every weekend is already taken until the end of May 2008, but we have openings in the latter part of the year.

Last Sabbath, January 18-19, 2008, we presented our LIFESTYLE SEMINAR with WORDS and SONGS at the Loma Linda Indonesian SDA Church. The interest was such that 5 other churches in the Loma Linda area, have already extended to us an official invitation to present one of our SABBATH, or ADVENT or LIFESTYLE SEMINARS with WORDS and SONGS at their church.

If you are interested to invite Cristina Piccardi and myself for a special seminar with Words and Songs, feel free to contact us by email <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> or by phone (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to give you the details and the open dates.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION TO ROY GANE’S ESSAY

The essay that you are about to read, appeared in the January issue of MINISTRY, the monthly magazine for our Adventist pastors. The author is Roy E. Gane, Ph. D. Prof. of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages, at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. It is reprinted with the permission of MINISTRY and the author.

Dr. Gane is respected by all as an outstanding Seminary professor. He has written a dozen of books and numerous scholarly articles. He is in the process of preparing a video recording of his sanctuary lectures. As soon as the recording is out I will be sure to inform you.

During the past 50 years several Adventist writers and popular preachers, have been engaged in a passionate campaign against the old Adventist legalism, promoting instead what is commonly called “Righ-

teousness by Faith.” The result has been that the pendulum has swung from one end to the other, leaving our members divided on this issue. Many Adventists are confused and hardly understand the balanced role that faith and grace plays in their salvation.

Roy Gane presents with clarity and logic the dual challenge we face today. I would urge you to read this essay thoughtfully and prayerfully. It will help you understand the important role that law and grace play in our salvation.

This essay represents only part I of a two parts article. The second part will be posted after its publication in MINISTRY.

For the sake of brevity the footnotes have been left out, since they are readily available in MINISTRY.

Samuele Bacchiocchi

Legalism and “Righteousness by Faith”

Part one of a two-part series

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Biblical Righteousness by Faith Versus Legalism

Properly understood in biblical terms, “righteousness by faith” is the key to salvation. In Romans 3:21-26, Paul eloquently encapsulates this magnificent truth that God reveals his righteous/just character not only through his law, but also when he extends mercy by forgiving and justifying those who have broken the law if they accept his righteousness through faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Paul stresses the extreme importance of righteousness by faith by repeating, explaining, and illustrating it through much of his epistle to the Romans (for example, see 4:5, 9, 11, 13; 9:30; 10:6) and in other letters (Gal 5:5; Phil 3:9). For Paul, righteousness by faith is the heart of the Gospel (Rom 1:16-17).

In Romans 3:24, those who believe “are now justified by his grace

as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (NRSV here and in subsequent biblical quotations). In other words, “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Essential to saving grace is a “legal” declaration of acquittal, as attested by many inspired statements.

But saving grace includes more: Because the justifying gift of grace brings the transforming presence of Christ, it naturally provides power to bear the gift of fruit in the life (sanctification): “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:4-8).”

Because “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23) and no amount of good works can ever redeem anyone from past failure, law-keeping is completely ruled out as a means of salvation, which is only ever by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9; cf. Titus 3:5). This does not mean that there is something wrong with God’s law, which is holy, just, good, and spiritual (Rom 7:12, 14). It serves the crucial purpose of protecting us by revealing what is right and, by contrast, what is wrong (3:20; 7:7-13). God’s law is holy because it is based on love (Matt 22:37-40), the basic principle of his holy character (1 Jon 4:8). However, while keeping God’s law results in life in the sense that its principles of cause and effect are for our benefit and preservation (Lev 18:5; cf. Exod 20:12), the law is powerless to help anyone who has already broken it (Gal 3:10-12).

Legalism is Misuse of the Law

God’s law is not legalistic, and neither is true obedience to that law. Rather, such obedience is “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). By freeing us from condemnation, Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:1-3) “so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (v. 4). Because “God’s love has been poured into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (5:5), we receive the basis of harmony with God’s law and character (namely, love) as a gift.

Legalism is misuse of the law for a purpose other than that for which it is intended. Legalism includes futile attempts to earn salvation by one’s own performance (e.g., Luk 18:9-14) and to gain assurance by achieving a minimum standard (Matt 19:16-22). Legalistic abuse of God’s law also includes using it, and human traditions added to it, to gain power over others (23:1-28). Rather than trying to protect people, whom the law is designed to protect, legalists hypocritically make a show of protecting the law itself, including their version of law, for which they claim divine authority (15:1-9). By laying down the standards to which others must adhere, legalists enhance their status, political clout, and even wealth. Such legalists end up violating God’s law by obscuring and ignoring the principles on which it is based (23:23-35). By taking the place of God, it could also be said that they commit a form of blasphemy.

Since we have thought of Satan as antinomian, which he is (cf. Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 3:8, 10), it may come as a surprise to find that he is the biggest legalist in the entire universe. This is not because he is divided against himself (cf. Matt 12:26), but because legalistic misuse of God’s law tears it down. Much more than ancient or modern Pharisees, Satan deceives people regarding God’s law, perverts it, and blasphemously uses his perverted version to gain power and to discourage people from victory over sin and salvation through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Then he turns around and hypocritically accuses God’s loyal people of being legalists because they are seeking to obey God! Because Satan tries to use God’s law against God’s loyal people to discourage, slander, and destroy them (Zech 3:1-5; Rev 12:10), he is a malicious false witness (Deut 19:16-19), which is one more reason for him to get a one-way ticket to hell.

Influence of Social Legalism

The kinds of legalism just described are alive and well in the Christian community today. For one thing, our society is so driven by performance that people have trouble switching gears when it comes to salvation. Because the Bible teaches that we are all judged by what we do and think (Eccl 12:14; Rom 2:16), many suppose that in order to be saved they must, by their own effort, keep from sinning. However, the Bible also teaches that true good works come from faith (Gal 5:6; cf. James 2:17-26),

which means that not sinning is possible only as a gift from God (Jude 24). Our salvation is not based upon our performance, but upon Christ (1 Jn 5:11-13). Any good works that we do are only involved in receiving, not earning, his gift of salvation.

We are also painfully aware of another kind of legalism among us: the imbalance of Christians who latch onto things that are really nonessential, which they regard as essential to do and attempt to force on others. Whatever the chosen issue may be, the effects are elitism, criticism or condemnation of others, and polarization of the church community. Those who try to restore harmony through sound biblical evidence and reasoning are often baffled by their lack of success, which is due to the fact that the main problem resides outside the bounds of rationality in the realm of personalities and their drives for influence and power.

A So-Called “Righteousness by Faith” Based on a Legalistic Assumption

There is another kind of widespread legalism, which is not generally recognized as such. This approach claims to be Gospel “righteousness by faith” because it emphasizes God’s free and gracious justification of sinners who believe in Christ and his once-for-all sacrifice as the only basis of their salvation. This much is biblical and resoundingly true, but it is skewed and skewered by being combined with the following system of concepts:

1. Not only are our mortal human natures tainted by sin so that we constantly need the covering atonement of Christ (which is true; cf. Num 28:1-8—daily sacrifice for all); beyond this, human moral depravity is so extreme that we commit sins all the time, including involuntarily.
2. Therefore, while the converted Christian life according to the Spirit (rather than according to the flesh) should manifest victory over sin in the process of sanctification as moral growth that accompanies justification, full obedience to God’s law, as revealed in the Old Testament, is impossible. This view has several corollaries:
 - a. Because moral transformation is limited, Christ’s work in believers and role as our example must be limited. All that matters is Christ’s substitutionary legal work for believers, which accounts them righteous

at all times, no matter what level of moral/spiritual failure or victory they may be experiencing.

b. The Old Testament law is an unreasonable and therefore obsolete standard of righteousness, which is superseded by the higher New Testament/“new covenant” standard of love.

c. A judgment of the works of Christian believers according to the standards of God’s law is irrelevant because works have nothing to do with their salvation and they are already judged as saved in Christ. They certainly could not be judged according to standards presented in the Old Testament, which are not binding on New Testament Christians.

This approach is based on a misunderstanding of sin and a legalistic view of God’s Old Testament law, against which it reacts by a form of antinomianism masquerading as grace. Riddled as it is by unbiblical eisegesis and illogical non-sequiturs, it is remarkable that so many Christians have been deluded by this false assurance. Following are brief critiques of its notions regarding depravity, obedience, justification, Old Testament law, and judgment.

1. Depravity

The widely held assumption of extreme human depravity has deep historical roots in the teachings of some Protestant Reformers, who challenged the Roman Catholic doctrine that because people are partly unaffected by sin, they are capable of contributing to their salvation through their own meritorious works. It is true that according to the Bible, all human beings are pervasively perverted because of sin (e.g., Rom 3:10-18, 23; referring to Pss 5, 14, 36, 53; Isa 59) and this moral weakness inclines toward further sins (James 1:14-15). The fallen sinful body and its evil propensities remain until Christ’s Second Coming, when God’s faithful people will be changed and receive immortality (1 Cor 15:52-53). Any moral good that we have is from God, from outside of ourselves (Rom 7:18).

In the Bible, words for “sin” can refer either to fallen nature as a dynamic state of being, or to specific infractions of divine law. Examples of sin as nature/state are Ps 51:5 (Hebrew verse 7)—“in sin (ḥēṭ’) my

mother conceived me”; Rom 7:17 — “sin (*hamartía*) which dwells in me”; and 1 Jn 1:8, “If we say that we have no sin (*hamartía*), we are deceiving ourselves” (all NAS ’95 update). This concept explains why some Israelite animal sacrifices, prefiguring Christ’s sacrifice, were offered as expressions of joy when expiation/atonement (*Pi’el* of *kpr*) and forgiveness for specific sins was not needed (Lev 7:11-17 — thanksgiving, votive, and freewill subcategories of well-being/peace offerings; cf. chap. 3): Even human praise is tainted by sin and needs the mediation of Christ’s sacrifice in order to be acceptable to God.

Other biblical passages speak of “sin” in the sense of specific violations of God’s law (i.e., “sins”): “sin (*hamartía*) is lawlessness” (1 Jn 3:4); “All wrongdoing [literally, “unrighteousness”] is sin” (5:17); “Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17; NAS95); “whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). Sin in this sense can be a verb, for example: “If anyone of the ordinary people among you sins (*Qal* of *ḥṭ’*) unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD’S commandments ought not to be done” (Lev 4:27); “No one who abides in him sins” (present tense of *hamartáno* 1 Jn 3:6). Sinning involves breach of one’s relationship with God because it is out of harmony with his character of love (1 Jn 4:8) and his law, which is based on love (Matt 22:37-40).

Sins can be actions or thoughts (Matt 5:21-30). They can be deliberate (Lev 6:2-3 [Hebrew 5:21-22]) or inadvertent/unintentional (Lev 4). But they are never simply automatic. In the ancient Israelite ritual system, which dealt with many aspects of human faultiness, the only automatic human conditions that required ritual remedies were some kinds of physical ritual impurities (e.g., menstruation; nocturnal emission) that excluded persons from contact with God’s inner sphere of holiness/life centered at the sanctuary (e.g., Lev 12, 14-15; Num 5:1-4; Deut 23:10-11 [Hebrew vv. 11-12]). Physical ritual impurities, such as corpse contamination (voluntary), scaly-skin disease (so-called “leprosy”; involuntary), and healthy or abnormal genital flows (voluntary or involuntary) belonged to a conceptual category associated with “the birth-death cycle that comprises mortality,” which results from sinful action (cf. Rom 6:23; James 1:15).

Because physical impurities were not violations of divine commands, they were not moral faults requiring forgiveness, as shown by the

fact that persons who offered purification offerings (so-called “sin offerings”) for severe physical impurities received “atonement” = “purgation” (*Piel* of *kpr*) that only resulted in physical ritual purity. This cleansing was not prerequisite to forgiveness, which such individuals did not need (e.g., Lev 12:6-8; 14:19-20; 15:15; contrast forgiveness in 4:20, 26, 31, 35 in cases of sin). Although Christians can learn from these physical impurities and their remedies, which show us that Christ’s sacrifice ultimately redeems us from our state of mortality and sinful nature (1 Cor 15:52-53; cf. Ps 103:3—“who heals all your diseases”; Jn 3:16—“eternal life”), the ritual remedies for them no longer apply because Christ’s ministry is in God’s heavenly temple (Heb 7-10), which cannot be affected by human physical states as the earthly sanctuary/temple could.

Some well-meaning and otherwise well-informed Christian interpreters have mistakenly interpreted some Israelite sacrifices that removed physical ritual impurities, such as the red heifer that remedies corpse contamination, as sacrifices for committing sins. For example, while NRSV correctly understands the end of Num 19:9 to label the burning of the red heifer as “a purification offering” (cf. NJPS “for cleansing”), KJV, RSV, NKJV, NASB, NAS95, and NIV incorrectly render “purification/purifying from/for sin.” Because physical impurities can be automatic, reading “sin” in a case of physical impurity can lead to the wrong conclusion that committing sins can be automatic. Thus the great preacher Charles Spurgeon interpreted the red heifer ritual: “Who has lived for a single day in this base world, without discovering that in all his actions he commits sin, in everything to which he puts his hand, he receives, as well as imparts, some degree of defilement?”

Not all human imperfection, even in the sphere of conscious activity, can be regarded as sin. Human life is fraught with all kinds of non-sinful imperfections due to our limitations of skill, knowledge, memory, physical coordination, and so on. For example, while a worker should do his best (cf. Eccl 9:10; 2 Tim 2:15), there is no indication that he needs forgiveness from God if something goes wrong or is not absolutely perfect (cf. Jer 18:4).

2. Obedience

In Romans 3:10-18 Paul describes the pre-conversion spiritual state, showing that all human beings need God’s gift of justification through

Christ. An indispensable part of the Christian life is to progressively accept God’s precious gift of victory over our fallen natures by partaking of the transforming power of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:1-4). By God’s grace, Christians can and should keep their sinful natures under control (1 Cor 9:27).

According to Paul, “since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). This is not false assurance that declares “‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (cf. Jer 6:14; 8:11). Rather, it is reconciliation with God that results in true hope “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). So when God converts people by his grace, he brings them into harmony with his character and law of love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8; Matt 22:37-40) by progressively pouring love into their hearts through his Holy Spirit.

The role of the Spirit is essential for conversion, and the Spirit’s role is to empower spiritual transformation that can be metaphorically termed “new birth” (Jn 3:5-8; Titus 3:4-7; cf. Rom 8). Therefore, spiritual transformation is an integral, essential part of conversion along with forgiveness for past sins (cf. Rom 3:25).

Jesus came not to save his people in their sins, but from their sins (Matt 1:21). For Christians, committing sins is not inevitable. According to Jude 24, God “is able to keep you from falling.” John writes: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin” (1 Jn 2:1). He recognizes that God’s children may occasionally fall in their progressive journey toward harmony with God’s character, so he adds in the same verse: “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...” Nevertheless, John recognizes the possibility of not committing sins, or it would make no sense for him to encourage people to abstain from this. Keep in mind that we are talking here about development/maturation of character, not sinless perfection of nature, which nobody receives until glorification.

In the New Testament, disobedience to God’s law is sin (1 Jn 3:4), and this includes his Old Testament moral law (see below). Even in Old Testament times, God intended his law to be kept. Thus Moses encouraged the Israelites to be loyal to God because obedience to his law is accessible

(Deut 30:11-14). Of course they could not obey God in their own strength. But if they truly loved the Lord with all their heart, soul, and might (6:5), their internalized heart relationship with him would have been like the “new covenant” experience, in which God puts his law within people and writes it on their hearts (Jer 31:33).

Those who think they must go on continually sinning until Jesus comes tend to brand as legalistic “perfectionism” the biblical teaching of progressively overcoming sin through God’s Holy Spirit and “Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). But obedience to God’s law of love by grace through faith is not legalism, and God empowers the level of obedience that he requires (cf. 1 Cor 10:13). Without this divine intervention, obedience is impossible.

Thus, commenting on 1 John, Hans La Rondelle has observed: “To John the life of holiness is to be lived on the level of miracle. The impossibility of sinning therefore to John does not spring forth from any inherent metaphysical quality but from the reality of the victorious and cleansing union of faith with the Crucified and Risen One who is essentially holy and righteous.”

Conclusion to Part I

It is true that Christ wants “to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27), but it is Christ who takes responsibility for purifying the church (vv. 25-26). His “bride” is able to make herself ready for “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7) because “‘to her it *has been granted* to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure’—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (v. 8; emphasis supplied). So “righteous deeds” are a gift from God. What we are responsible for is receiving the gift, which involves cooperating with God.

ENDNOTES: are omitted for the sake of brevity. Interested readers can find them in the January 2008 issue of *Ministry*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER ON 12 DVD/CD ALBUMS FOR ONLY \$150.00, INSTEAD OF THE REGULAR PRICE OF \$1150.00

This offer may sound too good to be true. Until January 31, 2008, we are offering together as a package all the 12 DVD/CD albums, containing Cristina Piccardi’s DVD and CD albums, the new *Sabbath Seminar with Words and Songs*, Prof. Jon Paulien’s DVD album on *Simply Revelation*, Prof. Graeme Bradford’s DVD Album on *More than a Prophet*, and my own 9 DVD albums on such topics as *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, *Cracking the Da Vinci Code*, *The Passion of Christ*, *the Abundant Life Seminar*, *the Sabbath and Advent Seminars*. Until now these recordings were sold separately, costing considerably more. To make it possible for many to benefit from all these timely messages, I have decided to offer them together as a package for **only \$150.00**, instead of the regular price of **\$1150.00**. **The offer is good until January 31, 2008.**

The Package Includes the Following 12 Albums:

- 1) DVD Album with *Sabbath Seminar with Words and Songs* recorded at the Avon Park SDA Church on November 16-17, 2007. The album contains three DVD disks with 6 hours of recordings.**
- 2) DVD and CD Albums containing Cristina Piccardi’s sacred songs. The CD Album “Rejoice in the Lord” contains 11 songs. The DVD Album “Sing Unto the Lord” contains 10 songs.**
- 3) Prof. Jon Paulien’s newly released DVD ALBUM video seminar on *Simply Revelation*.**
- 4) Prof. Jon Paulien’s CD ALBUM with a dozen of his books, and all his articles.**
- 5) Prof. Graeme Bradford’s DVD ALBUM with a two hours video lecture on *Ellen White*. He shares the highlights of his book *More than a Prophet*. The album contains also Prof. Bradford’s the publications and articles.**
- 6) Prof. Bacchiocchi’s newly recorded DVD ALBUM called **ABUNDANT LIFE SEMINAR**. The album contains 2 video powerpoint lectures: *The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages* and *How to Build a Happy and Lasting Marriage*. These two lectures summarize the highlights of Bacchiocchi’s two books *Wine in the Bible* and *The Marriage Covenant*. Two separate files with 225 powerpoint slides are included.**
- 7) Prof. Bacchiocchi’s DVD ALBUM containing 10 video powerpoint lectures on the *Sabbath and Second Advent*. Some of the lectures show the documents Prof. Bacchiocchi found in Vatican libraries on the role of**

the papacy in changing the Sabbath to Sunday. This album contains the popular powerpoint SABBATH/ADVENT seminars Prof. Bacchiocchi presents in many countries.

8) Prof. Bacchiocchi’s DVD ALBUM on Cracking the Da Vinci Code. The album contains a two hours video lecture, professionally taped with a virtual studio as a background. A separate file with 200 powerpoint slides is included.

9) Prof. Bacchiocchi’s DVD ALBUM on The Mark and the Number of the Beast. The album contains the two hours video lecture and a separate powerpoint file with the 200 slides used for the lecture.

10) Prof. Bacchiocchi’s CD ALBUM with all his books and powerpoint lectures. The album consists of two disks. The first disk has all his 18 books and over 200 articles. The second disk has the slides and script of 25 of Prof. Bacchiocchi’s popular PowerPoint presentations.

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SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER ON PROF. JON PAULIEN’S LIVE DVD SEMINAR ON *SIMPLY REVELATION*

You may have noticed that the new 2008 Daily Devotional Book *The Gospel from Patmos*, is authored by Prof. Jon Paulien. He has done a masterful job in expanding each verse of the Revelation into a daily devotional thought.

To help you appreciate more fully Paulien’s Daily Devotional, we offer you his DVD album on *SIMPLY REVELATION* that was released few months ago. We have been **airmailing** the DVD album to church leaders, pastors, and lay Adventists in different part of the world. Several pastors have already shown the lectures to their congregations. They wrote to me saying that viewing the lectures were truly an enlightening experience for their members.

My wife and I viewed *Simply Revelation* on our TV on a Sabbath afternoon. Though I had already watched Prof. Paulien’s lectures during the taping session which I paid for, I was spellbound to hear him again offering so many refreshing insights into the most difficult book of the Bible. For me it is a thrilling experience listening to a scholar like Prof. Paulien, who knows what he is talking about.

Prof. Paulien is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the past 25 years. His doctoral dissertation as well as several of his books deal specifically with the Book of Revelation.

The constant demand for Prof. Paulien’s CD album with his publications and articles, led me to discuss with him the possibility of producing a live video recording of a mini Revelation Seminar, which he chose to call *Simply Revelation*. As suggested by its title, *Simply Revelation* aims to present simply the message of Revelation—not to read into Revelation sensational, but senseless views.

The preparation of this video recording took several months. The *Simply Revelation* seminar consists of **four one-hour live video lectures**, which have just been recorded in the studio of Andrews University. An impressive virtual studio provides the background of the lectures. Each lecture is delivered with about 50 powerpoint slides. This mini Revelation seminar will offer you and your congregation fresh insights into the Book

of Revelation. Be sure to inform your pastor about the newly released *Simply Revelation*, if he is not aware of it.

You will be pleased to know that we have placed on a separate file all the powerpoint slides and the script of the live lecture. This means that if you are a pastor or a lay member who want to use Prof. Paulien’s *Simply Revelation Seminar*, you can pick and choose the powerpoint slides that you like.

The file with the powerpoint slides is placed on Prof. Paulien’s CD album containing all his publications and articles. The reason is that there was no memory left on the DVD disks. In spite of my pleas, Prof. Paulien was so full of the subject that he used the full 60 minutes of each lecture, leaving no space for the slides’ file.

This has been a very expensive project, both in time and money. I sponsored it financially because I believe that many will be blessed by Paulien’s fresh insights into Revelation. The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you can order it now **at the SPEPCIAL PRICE for only \$30.00**. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

If you have not ordered before **the CD Album with Prof. Paulien’s publications**, we will be glad to add it to your DVD order for only \$20.00, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. This means that you can order **both the DVD album with Prof. Paulien’s four live video lectures on *Simply Revelation* and his CD album with all his publications and the powerpoint slides of *Simply Revelation*, for only \$50.00, instead of the regular price of \$160.00**.

As an additional incentive, I am offering you together with Prof. Paulien’s DVD/CD albums, also my own popular **DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, for an additional \$20.00, instead of the regular price of \$100.00**. This means that you can order **the DVD and CD albums by Prof. Paulien, together with my DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, for only \$70.00, instead of the regular price of \$260.00**.

This research on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, was commissioned by Prof. Paulien himself. He asked me to trace historically the origin and use of the Pope’s title *Vicarius Filii Dei* and of the number 666. I spent six months conducting this investigation which was professionally taped at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium. I use 200 powerpoint slides to deliver this informative two hours lecture which is

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UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR THE MONTHS OF FEBRUARY

Gradually I am rescheduling some of the invitations I had to cancel because of liver-cancer treatments. Here is a list of the upcoming weekend

seminars for the months of February 2008

FEBRUARY 1-2: TORONTO EAST SDA CHURCH

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FEBRUARY 8-9: LOMA LINDA ROMANIAN SDA CHURCH

Location: 26271 Mayberry Street, Loma Linda, CA 92354

For information and directions call Pastor Valentin Danaiaata at (909) 556-5491.

FEBRUARY 15-16: FIRST KNOXVILLE SDA CHURCH

Location: 3611 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN 37919.

For directions and information call Pastor Ed Komorowski at (865) 524-7842 or (865) 206-2082.

FEBRAURY 29-MARCH 1: LONDON, ENGLAND. EDMONTON

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