# THESignet

"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)

A bi-monthly publication of The Creation Seventh Day and Adventist Church

### The HOUSE of GOD

I was recently visited by evangelists from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Before my wife and I moved a few months ago, we had regular visits from a gentleman doing missionary work for the Jehovah's Witnesses. Unlike most people, I welcome these encounters. It gives me a rare opportunity to witness to those that I already know are interested in religion, and are not ashamed to show their faith. For all the contempt that the world seems to hold for door-to-door evangelists, these are people who - whether you agree with their motivations or not - have dedicated their time to what they believe the Gospel to be.

Now, one of the things that both Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons have in common, and that they have correctly in common, is the concept of a true, united Church. This is, indeed, a Biblical concept. Christ is not divided, nor is He a polygamist; He has one Bride, and while Its members may be separated by time and space, they are not separated by doctrines, organizational loyalties or major lifestyle decisions. The only thing with which we would disagree with the messengers of these faiths (on that matter) is the means by which this true Church, this House of God upon the earth, is identified.

During his talk with us, the Jehovah's Witness focused on end-time prophecies, attempting to show that the early 1900s was the right "time" for the Church to appear. The Mormons focused on prophecy itself, explaining that by the revelations given to Joseph Smith, which can be known to be valid by individual prayer, they were now convinced that the religion he set up is the right one. As Creation Seventh Day Adventists, we would find issue with both of these approaches to identifying the Bride of Christ.

Prophecies are, according to the Bible, given for a particular reason. We read, "he that prophesieth edifieth

the church." (1Cor 14:4b)
When I was first introduced to the mainstream Seventh Day Adventist faith by some friends of mine, one of the things that impressed me about the material they were explaining was the logical and powerful way in which they set forth the prophecies found in the Book of Revelation. As a non-zealous Roman Catholic at the time I had payer.

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zealous Roman Catholic at the time, I had never heard anything about prophecy, and little if anything about preparing for a judgment.

I was immediately attracted to a message that contained prophetic truth, and began to study with my friends, eventually becoming a baptized Seventh-day Adventist. But... in my ignorance, I joined a church that was fallen. I did not know (like most Adventists even today) that I had been betrayed by those whom I had chosen as my religious leaders. I did not understand that by my membership I was entering into a covenant with men who, for the sake of fleshly concerns and "worries," were persecuting Protestant Christians in civil courts. And yet, the prophecies very clearly indicated that Sabbath-keeping Adventists would be the individuals united in a final Christian movement.

Prophecies exist to edify a people who are already committed to righteousness. They are not always very useful when it comes to identifying the people who are fulfilling the prophecy, even assuming that the words of Scripture are being properly interpreted. For the most part, the prophetic interpretation of the mainstream Seventh-day Adventist Church is perfectly correct, but merely having a correct method of interpreting prophecy does not a Church make!

Of course, we would have problems with the way that Jehovah's Witnesses interpret the prophecies anyway (for example, they have absolutely no comprehensible justification for applying the "seven times" of Daniel 4:16 to the "time of the Gentiles" that would exist until the restoration); but even were that correct, that is not conclusive evidence of the Body of Christ. But even were they perfectly correct, there is still something else that needs to be present to indicate the validity of their organization.

Now the Latter Day Saints make an appeal to emotion when discussing their acceptance of Joseph Smith as a prophet. And, to be fair, it is true that some things must be taken on faith; however, we must be very careful when deciding what we are going to use as our standard of truth. The Scriptures tell us, "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) Additionally, we know, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" (2Tim 3:16) And we are cautioned, "Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Pro 3:5)

In essence, we must judge our experiences, thoughts, emotions and beliefs by the Words of the Bible, trusting in its plain teachings more than what we "feel" to be true. The most profound testimony a Latter Day Saint typically provides is that they know that the Mormon Church is true, and that Joseph Smith is a prophet, because when they prayed and asked God if it was true, they received a witness of the Holy Spirit that it was. I asked our recent visitor, "So, this witness... is it a feeling, an emotion?" And he said, "Yes, it is a feeling."

Now, as unstable as that may sound, the truth is that a good student of the Bible knows that the standard of truth must be the written Word. Our guest knew (although they are taught not to say that!) for I replied, "In our experience, it is best to judge our feelings by the Word, and not the Word by our feelings. How is it that you know your feelings are right?"

I continued, "We know that in some religions, believers 'feel' very justified in blowing themselves up to promote their faith. We know their feelings are very strong, enough for them to die for, so what is it that separates your feeling from theirs?"

He replied, "This feeling that comes is the true voice of God."

I said, "Well, I understand you accept that from your perspective, but those who hear other messages also very strongly believe that they are hearing the true voice. Their convictions are as strong as yours that they are hearing God, so how do you deal with that? What I would say is, we know the feelings to be right ones when the behavior they produce is in accordance with the Word's description of a born-again believer. Wouldn't you agree that this is true?"

He said, "Yes, the actions follow, and that is how we can tell." So I said, "Ah, then you DO base your beliefs on the Bible, and not on the feeling, because you do what we do, and rightly so...

you judge it to be true or false based upon the testimony in the Scriptures."

He agreed with me, somewhat hesitantly, but... there are still other issues involved there. For example, an individual who accepts Joseph Smith as a prophet, and the Mormon Church as the true one, receives the feeling, and is generally baptized into the faith, before they see any real "fruit of the Spirit" based upon that feeling. Furthermore, from a CSDA perspective, we would not see this feeling as leading to the genuine Christian walk, because... one of the differences we had with both the Jehovah's Witness missionary and our Latter Day Saint guests was that of the doctrine of Victory over sin.

All prophecy and prophets aside, temporarily, Creation Seventh Day Adventists (and anyone who reads the Gospels and the Epistles of John and others without accepting compromise) can never consider a message to be legitimate unless it teaches the full power of Christ in the believer, the power to overcome all deliberate acts of sin in the life through a thorough transformation of the mind. As it is written, "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom 12:2) And again, "we have the mind of Christ." (1Cor 2:16b)

The Messiah did not tell His followers, "Go forth and preach the prophecies to every creature," nor did He say, "Baptize everyone by the authority of this or that prophet." Instead, "He said unto them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

Of course, any evangelist will protest, "But I am preaching the Gospel."

The Bible tells us that there are messages called "the gospel" that are not beneficial. In fact, Paul rebukes the Church at Galatia, saying, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal 1:6-8) There are other "gospels," yet, as Paul indicates, they are not truly gospel, not truly "good news" but rather news that is apparently good, yet results only in continued bondage to sin and self.

But what is "good news?" Is it good news that our divine Parent takes us out of sin, cleans us up, and restores us, only to send us right back into the spiritual mud pits in which we had wallowed? This cannot be it, for Peter speaks of those who are *not* saved, and those who teach them a faulty gospel, saying, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Yahshua the Messiah, they are again entangled

therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'" (2Pet 2:19-22)

When we share this Word with those who are stuck in what we call the "sin-repent" cycle, they will often tell us, "You are not using that passage correctly. Peter is not talking about falling into known sins specifically, but a *life* of sin, a lifestyle that is sinful." It may appear, upon a very casual reading of the passage, that this is so, yet Peter is specific to state something that is not absolutely necessary to the point he is making, "for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Those who know their Gospels well will recognize this as a parallel teaching to a statement made by Christ: "Yahshua answered them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:34-36)

Here we see the same concepts being presented: sin, bondage, and freedom. But the wording there that Yahshua uses, "committeth sin," is not referring to continuous acts. The word simply means to produce, to bring forth, to do. And lest this be read as loosely as possible, we have yet a third witness, for we are told, "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)

When I presented these things to our Latter Day Saint visitors, the one who spoke the most said, "Oh, yes... of course, these are the things we strive to attain..." and this is where they, like the Jehovah's Witness, like most mainstream Christians, begin to sound exactly the same. For all the disdain that some Evangelical and Protestant groups (and certainly the world) have for these two religions, the truth of the matter is that they all have far more in common than they should. In the matter of what the Gospel means in their lives, they all speak the exact same language.

I said to our guest, "Well, that hasn't really been my experience. When I accepted the faith of Jesus, this was what happened to me, not something that I earned or gained. It was given as a gift; and you know, the only thing the Bible says we must labor for, is to enter into God's 'rest." In referencing Hebrews 4, I was able to bring in another difference that we have with these two groups. Still holding the Gospel as "the chief thing," I said, "This is what the Sabbath day teaches us, to rest from our works, and experience a spiritual rest," for I had already told them that my wife and I were Adventists. "And we are curious also," I concluded, "why it is that you do teach the commandments should be kept, yet you do not keep the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath."

Our guests replied that they believed that when Christ ascended to Heaven, the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. I asked where

the Bible indicated this. He said, "The believers broke bread on the first day of the week." I replied, "That is true, they did, yet the Bible says that they went daily from house to house, breaking bread and meeting to discuss their faith. I do not see that this practice of the early Christians can somehow, without any divine instruction, set aside the great emphasis within the Bible placed upon this period of time from the very first week of the creation down until after the crucifixion - for the disciples did rest after the death of the Savior." I continued on to recount the historical records preserved from those early centuries, indicating that Christians, New Testament, age-of-Grace, born-again, Gospel-teaching believers, were Sabbath keepers right up until the time Rome came into power. Rome and Antioch were the first two congregations to begin keeping Sunday instead of Sabbath - and this was long after Yahshua ascended into Heaven.

Our visitors said that they would research this and get back to

But so went that conversation; and so go all conversations between Creation Seventh Day Adventists and those of other faiths. We may occasionally speak with those who have some things in common with us, such as the Sabbath day or even the Feast days, yet the Scriptures tell us, as quoted above, "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) Having the Law (including, but not limited to, being a Sabbath keeping group) is not enough. Having a "testimony" or a message, even a prophetic one, is not enough. One must have a message that agrees with the Law, and a Gospel that is "the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev 12:17)

This is how we identify the Church, the Body of Christ on earth. It will, of course, follow the Law of Christ – and make no mistake, the 10 Commandments are not merely the Law of the Father; in Psalm 89:30, the Father indicates that the faithful "children" of the Son are not to forsake the Law either. It will, of course, have a testimony – a message to share with the world. But that message will not be one of salvation in sin; it will be one of salvation *from* sin, for if we are "free *indeed*," (John 8:34) how can we dare say, "We are free in spirit, but not in deed?"

Some religions forbid their people to read the material of other Churches. Some discourage them from speaking with those who are strong in other faiths. But we of the Light have no fear of such things. When our brothers and sisters are brought in to the faith, and are established on the foundation of Christ, what lesser message, what lesser Gospel, what lesser testimony, can move them? If a man is free of the bondage of sin, and walking in the light, and finding that he has power over his habits, thoughts and deeds, what profit is there in accepting a message that says to him, "What you claim to have been doing is impossible! Come enter a Church where it is ok to occasionally sin, because you know you will anyway... and we are not taught any higher position for man except, perhaps, that he will get to something like that after some striving, maybe after some time."

The Gospel is the only thing about which we can afford to be impatient. Christ does not want to bring us out of sin "someday," and after much effort on our parts. He has made the day – the day of the Cross; He has made the effort – the infinite sacrifice He provided, leaving the glories of Heaven to be mocked, abused, and nailed to a wooden frame – to suffer in body and (especially) spirit for the wrongs that we have done. The work of establishing the faith is over. The Church has been gathered, and is being gathered; and She is preparing Herself to meet Her Husband. The time for those yet on the outside to gather is *yesterday*; for already the Groom appears to delay His coming. But we, who have brought extra oil, await the surprising, but long-awaited cry, "He cometh!"

We have all that that is required for our sanctification, because Christ has given to us all we need, and has done no incomplete work. The true Bride has the Law, the Testimony, the Good News, and... we who are Her members have the means of knowing when we are hearing a message with which She agrees. That is how we recognize the House of God.

Can you recognize It?

— D.P. Aguilar

# Tolerance VS LIBERTY

One of the issues heavily discussed among the founding fathers of the United States was that of tolerance vs. liberty. The distinction might come as a strange one to some in our day, as the topic is usually one of "tolerance" vs "intolerance" as related to matters of personal opinion.

During the writing of the Constitution, however, "intolerance" had a far more severe meaning than the relatively sensitive definition given it today. For those who came to America in it's founding stages, "intolerance" did not mean a verbal or perceived insult directed at ones heritage or beliefs – it meant being driven from country to country, imprisoned, tortured, suffering confiscation, taxation, and death for that heritage or belief.

For most today this is an unfamiliar concept. As a result, the line between "tolerance" and "liberty" has become greatly blurred, if not lost altogether – yet the difference is one that is critical to understand, particularly in these last moments of Earth's history.

As George Washington wrote, "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural right, for happily, the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection shall demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."

For a man to offer tolerance to another man for his faith is to say, in essence, that the man has the power and authority to show tolerance or intolerance at his own discretion. Tolerance is something given as a favor, an indulgence of a sort, given of grace by one of greater power.

Liberty, on the other hand, is a God-given right, and at that an inalienable one – one that no man, no matter his station or position, can in any way ever take away. So in religious things, there is a great difference between "religious tolerance" and "religious liberty." Tolerance is freedom allowed until revoked – liberty is freedom inherent and irrevocable.

As Christians, we must assert our religious liberty, not our religious tolerance. No man can assert tolerance because tolerance can be taken away at will by the one tolerating. It is upon this principle that we take issue with the idea of "concessions" in matters of religious liberty, and specifically in regards to the name Creation Seventh Day Adventist.

Most who have been following the Seventh-day Adventist trademark controversies from their beginning are familiar with Rafael Perez and the Eternal Gospel Church that were involved in a lawsuit in Miami, Florida in the late 1990s. Despite the firm protests at the beginning that they were Seventh-day Adventists and would not be giving up that name, they conceded out of court to a very specific and exact set of rules and restrictions for how they could use their name. A brief excerpt of this agreement follows:

"4. GENERAL CONFERENCE and PEREZ agree henceforth PEREZ shall use only the language (or its foreign equivalent), format, size, and style contained in this paragraph and as set forth in Exhibit "A" to this Agreement and GENERAL CONFERENCE agrees that such use will not violate the Court's Order of April 27, 2000:

Line 1: "ETERNAL GOSPEL CHURCH" – This first line will be in all upper case letters.

Line 2: "Founded in (1990 or any later year) by Seventh-day Adventist Believers" – This second line will be in upper and lower case letters precisely as quoted, will be in the same color as the first line and words "Seventh-day Adventist" will not be emphasized in any fashion, e.g. will not be in a different color, will not be in a different type style, will not be bolded, etc.

The second line will not be more than 60% in size of the first line.

The first and second line will be positioned one on top of the other and centered, exactly as they appear in the example attached as Exhibit A hereto." – As quoted in *Landmarks magazine*, June 2001

No reasonable man can possibly consider the terms of this agreement to be anything synonymous with "freedom" or

"liberty." This is an example of "tolerance" – the General Conference will "tolerate" their usage of the name Seventh-day Adventist in a very particular way, so long as it comes within a very specific and exacting code – down to font color, size, alignment, and capitalization.

In order for one to even consider agreeing to such terms, they must concede that the ones making the offer have the position, authority, and jurisdiction to make such an offer to begin with – that they have a right to offer tolerance as opposed to an obligation to respect liberty.

It is our position that no man or organization, however arrogant they may be, has the prerogative to offer to "tolerate" our obedience to Yahweh in matters of religion and faith. Our name, and the faith it represents, is a matter of freedom and of liberty – and thus we cannot acknowledge the attempts of any who would seek to cheapen this liberty and bring it down to the level of mere tolerance.

In essence, to concede to a compromise by which you are then bound, one has to acknowledge that the person they are compromising with has the right to penalize you to begin with. If a strange man walked into my house and demanded that I leave, I would not be satisfied to simply concede to leave between certain hours, but not altogether. By doing so, I would be acknowledging that he has any say whatsoever in the matter, and thus would be bowing to his authority.

Similarly in the current trademark conflict, to make a concession such as the one quoted above is to acknowledge that the General Conference has the prerogative to either tolerate or not tolerate our usage of the name God has given us. It is to bow to their assumed authority over our religious liberty – whether that authority asserts that "you cannot use this name," or that "you can only use this name in this very certain way."

What we say is that no man or group of men has authority over our conscience; we are Creation Seventh Day Adventists, and that is the name the Lord has given us, regardless of the mandates and compromises of men. Of this name, we shall never be ashamed. "The 'establishment of religion' clause of the First Amendment means at least this:

Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church.

Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or <u>prefer one religion over another.</u>

Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or <u>force</u> him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion.

No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance.

No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion.

Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa.

In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect 'a wall of separation between Church and State."

- Hugo L. Black, U.S. Supreme Court Justice

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