

## Dale Ratzlaf reply to Elder Lake

The Adventist church is fighting back against “us” with a vengeance. They are taking legal action against contrarian websites. They are publishing books. They are holding “conferences” and [releasing the video](#) onto the Internet. One of the video sessions is essentially a personal attack against Dale Ratzlaf wrapped in a defense of Ellen White.

I read Dale’s [response letter](#) to [Jud Lake’s video](#) and I agree with him. Humorous is the suggestion that Ratzlaf is the “fountain head of all the critics”. True, he’s known and is read, and true many people have had their eyes opened by knowledge and perspective gained from reading [Cultic Doctrine](#) and [Sabbath In Christ](#). (Personally, I’ve not read any of Dale’s books or any other “former”). But he hardly is the source of criticism. If anyone in our modern times is the fountain head it would be [Walter Rae](#) and his [exposure](#) of Ellen White’s “borrowing”. The real source is the obvious problems themselves.

I watched both Lake’s and Knight’s presentation. I am struck with how sarcastic and demeaning they sound, and how they appear to ridicule Adventists for holding in high esteem Ellen White’s writings (“dysfunctional use”), all the while using the same tone to ridicule those who point out the problems. Lake’s tone and off-hand comments are carefully designed to ridicule and discredit Ratzlaf.

I’ve never held that EGW was verbally inspired and don’t know *anyone* who ever did. We *all* felt that she was inspired and authoritative, just like what the “27” book officially proclaims: “...her writings are a continuing and **authoritative** source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction and correction.”

The church used Ellen White in a dysfunctional way to attract and keep converts, and continues to defend her. The official position is that the mark (divine stamp of approval) of the true church is the Spirit of Prophecy (Ellen White). When people use her in a way that the modern “Evangelical” leaders know is wrong and dysfunctional they simply turn on the members and say “well, they’re just not using Ellen White correctly.” So where is this official pronouncement of the correct way to regard and to use Ellen White? Is the official church ready to admit that the [borrowing](#), historic errors, [questionable memory](#) and flawed humanity make her unfit to be the authority in deciding theology?

It is true: it is we former pastors who are among the critics; there are many current pastors who remain silently critical. If the pastors would find courage and vocally declare their doubts of the sanctuary message and of Ellen White the sound would be deafening. The historic Adventist would declare it the Omega of apostasy. Yet, it is Ellen White who drives their firm belief in the theology and predictions of apostasy. They are convinced she is the most important prophet, and more than a prophet. She has put her stamp of approval on a set of doctrines and has written 9 volumes of “thus saith the lord”.

Here is the progression:

1. William Miller and the early founders came up with theological positions
2. Ellen White supported their positions with visions and manifested unexplained phenomenon.
3. The early founders affirmed their belief that she was a prophet since she had visions and agreed with Scripture – their interpretation of Scripture that is.
4. She took theological positions and pressed the doctrinal and behavioral direction of the church supported by visions.
5. Adventists published the theological teachings and supported it with the prophet
6. Ratzlaf disagrees with Adventist doctrine and with Ellen White. He is wrong because Ellen White predicted that “bright lights will go out” and because he is against God’s messenger.

When anyone examines the doctrines the Adventist church holds and finds problems, since they are opposing the prophet they are, by definition, wrong and in apostasy and need to repent. Yet Adventists are blind to the incredible danger. Christ predicted that false prophets would arise in the end times; how do we know that Ellen White is not one? Is it because she agrees with the Bible? But if we are not allowed to examine the Bible and point out where she teaches differently how do we verify her? And if we must use her to interpret Scripture, is this not circular logic?

Indeed, her writings are like a wax nose: it’s bent to fit almost any theological proof required. The ultra-conservative, historical Adventists use her to [fight against Trinitarian doctrine](#) while the modern Evangelical Adventist uses her to prove grace and the gospel.

It is the myriad of unsolvable questions that has burned out the pastors and teachers. They now choose to focus on what they can prove and on more positive themes. They have questions but don’t want to pursue them and so they simply ignore them. To pursue their questions would be to risk their pulpit, pay, and pension.

Dale's letter is good. It is too easy for Adventists to brush off people like [Dirk Andersen](#) and Dale as the few inciting the not-many to question Adventism because of the insubstantial. This is simply not the case. Yes, there are many "nitpicking" examples of Ellen White's problems; there are also substantial problems with her. But all this is pointless. Let's posit that she never "borrowed" one line, never contradicted herself or tried to rewrite her own history, and the church never misused her writings. She still teaches a gospel and doctrine of the atonement that is contrary to sound New Testament teaching. Lake tells his listeners to "Let them see the fruits of Ellen White's prophetic ministry in your life." We've seen those fruits in the widespread legalism, critical spirit, fear and deadness over the decades.

What ignited the Apostles and early church was the pure teaching of a present and completed salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Filled with the Holy Spirit they brought Christ to the then known world.

People are not questioning Ellen White and Adventist traditions and theology because of Dale; Since the [Ford](#) controversy they have been driven to study the Bible for themselves. Like the Bereans, they are studying to see if Adventists are right and examining to see if there is any merit to the raised concerns. It is shameful that a movement that strongly declared that it had no creed has so theologically stagnated<sup>1</sup> and has launched such attacks against people who study and point out obvious theological and credibility problems.

For me, deeply studying Romans and Galatians opened my eyes to the beauty of the Gospel. Discovering the true teaching about the divinity of Christ, His pre-existence, and that He is the Creator awed and amazed me, especially given his condescension in becoming like us and dying on the cross to rescue the lost and reconcile us to Himself. Deeply studying Leviticus and Hebrews also revealed the cracks in our Sanctuary doctrine and proofs. I saw that the prophet taught and endorsed an anti-Biblical set of notions about law-keeping, the atonement, the cross, and about Christ's post-ascension ministry in heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> Though admittedly the ultra conservative historic Adventists identify much movement from orthodox Adventist belief toward "Rome" in the modifications to the beliefs and focus especially after 1928 and the 1950's.

Careful and prayer-filled study should easily prove the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines if they are true; Yet it seems that anyone brave enough to set aside their preconceived notions and who allows the Bible to speak for itself, generally concludes at the very least that traditional Adventist views and culture lean toward the legalistic and fearful; many conclude that it is an outright and dangerous heresy.

How about you: as you read this or any other contrarian websites, are you mad, defensive and indignant? Is the thought bubbling in your mind, “how dare he speak against God’s messenger?” Be honest with yourself:

- How much have you really studied?
- Can you “prove” from the Bible the Adventist doctrines, or are you like so many Adventists who say, “I’m not good at proving it, but I know it’s true.” On what are you placing your faith and trust? A solid knowledge of Scripture or a belief that “they” – Ellen White, the Adventist pioneers, and our theologians – have already proved it? How is this different than the Catholic who trusts in the pope and previous councils?
- Are you still allowing the echoes of Ellen White quotes to interpret passages of Scripture?
- Are you viewing Christ and the Bible through a veil?
- Have you searched to see if these things are so?
- Are you still resting on the traditional brush-aside position as defense against Ellen White’s plagiarism? Why did we take so long to finally officially research the question and why do we still commonly deny that she massively relied on not visions but on other authors of her day?
- Have you trivialized reports of how long and how firmly Ellen White and our founders taught the shut-door: that no one could or would be saved except those who had gone through and believed the 1844 heresy? Did you know she endorsed the shut-door with a vision from God? Did you know she endorsed with a vision from God the completely discredited William Miller “proof” 1843 chart?
- Have you actually read and wrestled with Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians?
- Have you verified the proofs of 1844, Investigative Judgment, two-phase sanctuary ministry of Christ?
- Have you asked if it is true that sin was transferred to the sanctuary by the confessions at the sacrifice? Are the proof texts right, for example when we say that the confessor places two hands and confesses? Is there Scriptural support? Does having the blood put onto the sanctuary defile?
- Have you allowed Scripture to define for you the old and the new covenants? Are Christians still under that law? What was the purpose of the law and old covenant? What does the Bible say?
- Have you stepped back and wondered why Adventists have been so legalistic over the years?

- And have you ever actually attended one of the “fallen” churches for any length of time, listened to the preaching, and watched the zeal with which the youth embrace Christ both in church and in their daily lives: and wondered, “wow, we don’t have preaching like that. Wow, our youth are not that enthusiastic about Christ.”

That list could go on and on. Personally, given Christ’s warnings of false prophets and false movements I find that I am compelled to study, to question, and to be brutally honest with what I find.

I applaud Dale Ratzlaf, Desmond Ford, Walter Rae and the many other people who have bravely and honestly exposed errors. I am at my core a true Adventist – I have no creed except the Bible and no matter if the largest or the smallest denomination teaches a doctrine: if I can find no support for it in Scripture or find that it contradicts the plain teaching I will not believe it. Though it cost reputation, job and friends I must above all else be true to conscience. The words of [Martin Luther](#) need to be ours:

“Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils [and so-called prophets], for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”