

JUST THREE SENTENCES IN LENGTH

The New Baptismal Vow

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IN THIS ISSUE: THE STANDARD BAPTISMAL VOW / THE ALTERNATIVE BAPTISMAL VOW / ANALYSIS OF THE NEW VOW / THE 28th STATEMENT OF BELIEF / INSPIRED STATEMENTS WARNING OF THIS

That is about all there is to it: (1) Profess faith in Jesus. (2) Say you believe the Dallas Statement (most will never read it). (3) Pay money into the church.

THE STANDARD BAPTISMAL VOW

Our standard baptismal vow has 13 points. Here it is:

“1. Do you believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit?

2. Do you accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of men, and believe that through faith in His shed blood men are saved from sin and its penalty?

3. Renouncing the world and its sinful ways, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, and do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins and given you a new heart?

4. Do you accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, recognizing Him as your Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, and do you claim His promise to strengthen you by His indwelling Spirit, so that you may receive power to do His will?

5. Do you believe that the Bible is God's inspired word, and that it constitutes the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian?

6. Do you accept the Ten Commandments as still binding upon Christians; and is it your purpose, by the power of the indwelling Christ, to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord?

7. Is the soon coming of Jesus the blessed hope in your heart, and are you determined to be personally ready to meet the Lord, and to do all in your power to witness to His loving salvation, and by life and word to help others to be ready for His glorious appearing?

8. Do you accept the Biblical teaching of spiritual gifts, and do you believe that the gift of prophecy in the remnant church is one of the identifying

marks of that church?

9. Do you believe in church organization, and is it your purpose to support the church by your tithes and offerings, your personal effort, and influence?

10. Do you believe that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that you are to honor God by caring for your body, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, abstaining from all unclean foods, from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages, the use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption, and from the misuse of, or trafficking in, narcotics or other drugs?

11. Knowing and understanding the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is it your purpose, by the grace of God, to order your life in harmony with these principles?

12. Do you accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion, and do you desire to be so baptized as a public expression of your faith in Christ and in the forgiveness of your sins?

13. Do you believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy, and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship? Do you desire membership in this local congregation of the world church?”—*Standard Baptismal Vow*.

THE ALTERNATIVE BAPTISMAL VOW

An alternative baptismal vow was introduced in 2005 at the St. Louis GC Session (June 29-July 9, 2005) by a delegate from the most worldly, new theology Adventist division in the entire world field: The South Pacific Division.

Here is this astounding new three-sentence baptismal vow:

“1. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, and do you desire to live your life in a saving relationship with Him?

2. Do you accept the teachings of the Bible as expressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and do you pledge by God's grace to live your life in harmony with these teachings?

3. Do you desire to be baptized as a public expression of your belief in Jesus Christ, to be accepted into the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to support the church and its mission as a faithful steward by your personal influence, tithes and offerings, and a life of service?"—Alternate Baptismal Vow.

When the motion was presented to the delegates at the St. Louis Session, a number of delegates arose and expressed deep concern. It was obvious that such a vow was totally empty of nearly every belief held by our denomination.

One delegate. (Brian Bull) "worried that placing the wording 'as expressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs' led to the danger of the church turning the fundamentals into a creed (*Adventist News Network*, "Delegates Debate Baptismal Vows." Press release. July 8, 2005).

The South Pacific Division leadership had been urging enactment of this ridiculously oversimplified baptismal vow for several years. (See Alfred Jorgensen, "Is the baptismal vow in need of revision?" *Australasian Record*, January 30, 1978, p. 11. Chris Blake, "Adding to the baptismal vows." *Australasian Record*, July 22, 2000, p. 12. Nathan Brown, "SPD backs alternative baptismal vow." *Record* 110:33 (August 27, 2005), p. 3.)

Unfortunately, only 8% of the delegates to a General Conference Session are laymen, and all the rest are either church leaders or their employees. So it need not be a surprise that they rather consistently approve whatever motion is set before them. I would not want to be in their shoes when the Judgment sits and the books are opened,—for this alternative baptismal vow is a major doctrinal sellout. It will result in the loss of many souls who were never properly taught the beliefs of our church, were never taught the importance of obeying the law of God, and were never introduced to the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.

ANALYSIS OF

THE ALTERNATIVE BAPTISMAL VOW

POINT ONE:

"1. Do you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, and do you desire to live your life in a saving relationship with Him?"

Every Baptist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian can accept this point. Even Catholics and Orthodox Christians will find little fault with it. This point says nothing about sin, repentance, obedience, or any other distinctive Adventist belief in regard to our relationship to Jesus Christ.

POINT TWO:

"2. Do you accept the teachings of the Bible as expressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and do you pledge by God's grace to live your life in harmony with these teachings?"

The person need not accept anything in the Bible, except those points specifically stated in the Dallas Statement. Unfortunately, most church members will never get around to even reading that official Statement.

The second "pledge" phrase, above, sounds helpful, but if it genuinely meant to mean anything—this three-sentence alternative vow would never have been enacted. The reason for this alternate vow is to get people into the church who have no desire or intention to learn or obey anything taught by our denomination.

POINT THREE:

"3. Do you desire to be baptized as a public expression of your belief in Jesus Christ, to be accepted into the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to support the church and its mission as a faithful steward by your personal influence, tithes and offerings, and a life of service?"

This third point essentially says just one thing: Support the church with your money.

THE 28TH STATEMENT OF BELIEF "GROWING IN CHRIST"

It is an astounding fact that, at this same, 2005 St. Louis General Conference Session, a second major doctrinal compromise was also approved by the delegates!

It is entitled, "*Growing in Christ*," so one would expect that it is referring to what we would call the process of daily sanctification; the daily life with Christ after initial conversion. Indeed, that was the reason given for including this additional paragraph to the Dallas Statement.

But our daily walk with Christ involves many, many aspects, including daily reconversion, resisting temptation, overcoming sin, and obeying the law of God, and coming back to Jesus if we fall into sin.

—Yet the entire paragraph says not one word

about any of those crucial points! It is no longer necessary for a Christian to obey the law of God,—or anything else that God commands!

Here is this 28th point (which is now listed as number 11 in the 28 point Statement of Belief):

"Growing in Christ—By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. **Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love.** Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually **committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds.** No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former ways of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.

"(Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11-12; Col 1:13-14; 2:6, 14-15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph 5:19-20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7-14; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Matt 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 8:38-39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25)"—*New paragraph (#11) added to Dallas Statement of Belief in 2005 at St. Louis.*

What does the above "Growing in Christ" paragraph really tell us? It teaches that, once we have accepted Christ, we are already saved! Christ obtained our salvation at the cross, 2,000 years ago, and all we need to do now is live our lives, attend church, and look forward to living forever in heaven.—This is the basic message of the new theology, and it is the special teaching now included in the official Statement of Belief of our denomination.

(For a more lengthy analysis of this new addition to the Statement of Belief, see our analysis, *The New Fundamental Belief* [WM-1304].)

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY STATEMENTS WHICH WARN OF SUCH COMPROMISES
"Rome withheld the Bible from the people, and

required all men to accept her teachings in its place. It was the work of the Reformation to restore to men the Word of God; but **is it not too true that in the churches of our time men are taught to rest their faith upon their creed and the teachings of their church rather than on the Scriptures?** Said Charles Beecher, speaking of the Protestant churches: **'They shrink from any rude word against creeds** with the same sensitiveness with which those holy fathers would have shrunk from a rude word against the rising veneration for saints and martyrs which they were fostering. . . The Protestant evangelical denominations have so tied up one another's hands, and their own, that, between them all, **a man cannot become a preacher at all, anywhere, without accepting some book besides the Bible . . There is nothing imaginary in the statement that the creed power is now beginning to prohibit the Bible** as really as Rome did, though in a subtler way."—*Great Controversy*, 388-389.

"The Roman Church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures. On the ground that ecclesiastics alone are competent to explain God's Word, it is withheld from the common people. Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet **the self-same principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church;** and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church."—*Great Controversy*, 596.

"In Switzerland, as in Germany, there came dark days for the Reformation. While many cantons accepted the reformed faith, **others clung with blind persistence to the creed of Rome.** Their persecution of those who desired to receive the truth finally gave rise to civil war."—*Great Controversy*, 211-212.

"The English Reformers, while renouncing the doctrines of Romanism, had retained many of its forms. Thus though the authority and the creed of Rome were rejected, not a few of her customs and ceremonies were incorporated into the worship of the Church of England. **It was claimed that these things were not matters of conscience; that though they were not commanded in Scripture, and hence were nonessential, yet not being forbidden, they were not intrinsically evil.** Their observance tended to narrow the gulf which separated the reformed churches from Rome, and **it was urged that they would promote the acceptance of the Protestant faith** by Romanists.

"To the conservative and compromising, these arguments seemed conclusive. But there was another class that did not so judge. The fact that these cus-

toms ‘tended to bridge over the chasm between Rome and the Reformation’ (Martyn, volume 5, page 22) was in their view a conclusive argument against retaining them. They looked upon them as badges of the slavery from which they had been delivered and to which they had no disposition to return. They reasoned that **God has in His Word established the regulations governing His worship, and that men are not at liberty to add to these or to detract from them. The very beginning of the great apostasy was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome began by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she ended by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined.”—Great Controversy, 289-290.**

“The doctrine that God has committed to the church the right to control the conscience, and to define and punish heresy, is one of the most deeply rooted of papal errors. While the Reformers rejected the creed of Rome, they were not entirely free from her spirit of intolerance. The dense darkness in which, through the long ages of her rule, popery had enveloped all Christendom, had not even yet been wholly dissipated.”—*Great Controversy*, 293.

“To secure converts, the exalted standard of the Christian faith was lowered, and as the result ‘a pagan flood, flowing into the church, carried with it its customs, practices, and idols’ (Gavazzi, Lectures, page 278). As the Christian religion secured the favor and support of secular rulers, it was nominally accepted by multitudes; but **while in appearance Christians, many ‘remained in substance pagans, especially worshiping in secret their idols.’—Great Controversy, 385.**

“Has not the same process been repeated in nearly every church calling itself Protestant? **As the founders, those who possessed the true spirit of reform, pass away, their descendants come forward and ‘new-model the cause.’** While blindly clinging to the creed of their fathers and refusing to accept any truth in advance of what they saw, the children of the reformers depart widely from their example of humility, self-denial, and renunciation of the world. Thus ‘the first simplicity disappears.’ **A worldly flood, flowing into the church, carries ‘with it its customs, practices, and idols.’**

“Alas, to what a fearful extent is that friendship of the world which is ‘enmity with God,’ now cherished among the professed followers of Christ! **How widely have the popular churches throughout Christendom departed from the Bible standard** of humility, self-denial, simplicity, and godliness!”—*Great Controversy*,

385.

“Many who call themselves Christians are mere human moralists. They have refused the gift which alone could enable them to honor Christ by representing Him to the world. The work of the Holy Spirit is to them a strange work. **They are not doers of the Word.** The heavenly principles that distinguish those who are one with Christ from those who are one with the world have become almost indistinguishable. **The professed followers of Christ are no longer a separate and peculiar people.** The line of demarcation is indistinct. The people are subordinating themselves to the world, to its practices, its customs, its selfishness. **The church has gone over to the world in transgression of the law, when the world should have come over to the church in obedience to the law.** Daily the church is being converted to the world.

“All these expect to be saved by Christ’s death, while they refuse to live His self-sacrificing life. They extol the riches of free grace, and attempt to cover themselves with an appearance of righteousness, hoping to screen their defects of character; but their efforts will be of no avail in the day of God.

“The righteousness of Christ will not cover one cherished sin. A man may be a lawbreaker in heart; yet if he commits no outward act of transgression, he may be regarded by the world as possessing great integrity. But God’s law looks into the secrets of the heart. Every act is judged by the motives that prompt it. **Only that which is in accord with the principles of God’s law will stand in the judgment.”—Christ’s Object Lessons, 315-316.**

“Christians are to keep themselves distinct and separate from the world, its spirit, and its influences. God is fully able to keep us in the world, but we are not to be of the world. His love is not uncertain and fluctuating. **Ever He watches over His children with a care that is measureless. But He requires undivided allegiance.** ‘No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.’ Matthew 6:24.”—*Prophets and Kings*, 59.

“We should not pattern after the world. We are to be in the world as a corrective influence, as salt that retains its savor. **Among an unholy, impure, idolatrous generation, we are to be pure and holy, showing that the grace of Christ has power to restore in man the divine likeness.** We are to exert a saving influence upon the world.”—*Counsels on Health*, 592.

