

accepted usage of the Hebrew of the Genesis account, the Adventist contention for a literal 24-hour Sabbath as the perpetual or eternal ‘seal’ of God’s creative power rests upon a shaky foundation.” We would certainly wish that instead of relying upon vague allusions to Hebrew or Greek grammatical or syntactical usage Mr. Martin would be more definite and come forth with one sound argument from Hebrew or Greek to support his theories. To us the appearance is given that, lacking familiarity with Biblical languages, resort is made to vague generalizations.

7. Primary Anti-Sabbath Texts

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AT THE BEGINNING Of the section “Primary Anti Sabbath Texts” in Walter Martin’s book The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism we are told, “In more than one place, the New Testament comments unfavorably upon the practice of any type of legalistic day keeping,” and also that the apostle Paul “declared that the Sabbath as ‘the law’ was fulfilled at the cross and was not binding upon the Christian.” (Page 161) We heartily agree that the New Testament does decry any form of legalism, which we define as a person seeking to earn salvation through his own efforts, or to become righteous by observing any set of rules or pattern of action. But we ask, Is it legalism willingly and gladly to shape our lives in harmony with the words of God in which He tells us how He wants His children to live? Or is it legalism to rest and worship on the day that God specifically in His Word has set apart for all mankind to keep holy?

It is significant to note that the Hebrew word for law, Torah, comes from the verb that means “to teach.” In reality God’s law is God’s teaching; it is God’s instruction to His people concerning His will for them and how He desires they should order their lives. The Ten Commandments is God’s specific teaching and instruction for His people, setting forth the guiding principles that He wishes should govern their day-by-day living. Whatever there is in the Word of God that expresses God’s teachings for the benefit of His people is in this sense law.

Parts of God’s law expressed His will for His people for a specific age and under certain conditions. Some portions of God’s teaching did lose their validity when the specific time for which God designed them had passed. After the cross some teachings (laws) of God’s Word were no longer applicable because that which they were designed to foreshadow had come to fruition. Other portions of God’s laws designed particularly for the Jewish nation became null and void when that nation existed no more as God’s chosen people. However, the great, timeless principles of the Ten Commandments and of the rest of the Bible that set forth the behavior God desires of His people in all ages were not abrogated at the cross, for they still represent the will of God for mankind. This is why the apostle Paul says, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

Mr. Martin says that the Sabbath as law was fulfilled and is not binding upon the Christian. The apostle Paul says that through Christian faith we establish the law. Would this author ask us to believe that we are not to order our lives in harmony with the first commandment of the Ten Commandments, or the third, or the sixth, or the seventh? Surely he would say that Christians are to live in harmony with these enduring principles of the Ten Commandments. How inconsistent it is, then, to say that though the Christian should shape his life in harmony with nine of the commandments, the fourth one has no validity, and that Christians need not live by it! How can one say this when the fourth commandment is as much God’s will as are the others? To keep the fourth commandment is not legalism any more than it is legalism to keep oneself pure, as we are instructed to do in the seventh commandment.

Colossians 2:13-17

In an endeavor to support his position he then reviews the major New Testament texts “which in context and in the light of syntactical analysis refute the Sabbath concept.”

We have met these allusions to context and to syntactical analysis before, but when we have examined them we find very little reference made to the laws of grammar or to the context either. Let us look at his arguments and note specifically the grammar and the context. The first of the texts cited is Colossians 2:13-17 from the Revised Standard Version. Then we find this comment: “First we who were

dead have been made alive in Christ, and have been forgiven all trespasses and sins. We are free from the condemnation of the law in all its aspects, because Christ took our condemnation on the cross. As already observed, there are not two laws, moral and ceremonial, but one law containing many commandments, all perfectly fulfilled by the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ." This passage of Scripture certainly does say that Christ has forgiven us our sins and that we are free from the condemnation of the law in all its aspects because Christ took our condemnation on the cross. To this we fully and heartily agree. But the bond that has been canceled, its debt paid and nailed to the cross, is our condemnation and guilt for having broken the law of God. This is far different from saying that the law was nailed to the cross. God's law was not against man; it was man's sin and violation of that law that was against him and that needed to be taken away. He then needs to receive an infusion of spiritual power, through union with Christ, to enable him to obey the will of God which is revealed in His Word and His law. Far from being contrary to us and against us, the apostle Paul says in Romans 7:12 that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." In verse 14 he declares that the law is spiritual. God gave it as an aid to man, not as something to work against him.

Why should men try to make a dichotomy between Christ or God and the law? The law had its origin in God. Christ was the agent of the Godhead in the giving of the law. God's moral law is an expression of His own character. How can one say that the law is against man and needs to be taken away? The function of the law is to point out to erring man his sins and his shortcomings; it is a guide to him, indicating the way that God would have him live. If man does not live according to God's will as expressed in the law, he is a sinner, and comes under the condemnation of the law. It is not the law that makes a man a sinner; he is a sinner because of his own acts, and the law merely defines how God would have him act, and points out transgression.

Christians should always hold clearly in mind that Christ had to die on the cross because of the sins of mankind. When a person violates a law, the matter is not solved by repealing the law, but by making a change in the lawbreaker. The penalty for his violation must be paid and he must be brought to the place where he is willing to abide by the law. It seems an anomaly for Walter Martin to suggest that the way to handle sin is to do away with the law that points out the way God would have men live and that brings conviction of sin to the person who violates it. Why can he not see that Christ died to atone for our transgression of the law, and not to abolish the law?

Walter Martin states that all law is fulfilled by the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is certain that Christ fulfilled the law, but this does not mean that the law was abrogated or made null and void; it means that Christ lived according to the law, fully. When John was reluctant to baptize Him, Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). It is folly to say that fulfilling all righteousness means to do away with or abrogate righteousness. In the same way, when Jesus fulfilled the law He by no means abrogated it. He Himself said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). It was Jesus' objective to observe the law and to keep it, and to teach men how they might observe it in the spirit that the heavenly Father intended.

As we have already mentioned, those portions of the law that had to do with the Jewish people as a nation ceased when the nation ceased, and those parts that dealt with ceremonial sacrifices, and meat offerings and drink offerings, and that pointed forward to Christ's sacrifice, had no further meaning after Christ had come. The ceremonial shadows met their substance in the person of Jesus. By dying on the cross, Christ wiped out the bond of man's debt for transgression of the law, and rendered inoperative, null and void, those aspects of the Torah that were ceremonial in nature, pointing forward as shadows to the actual person and ministry of Christ. These ordinances had served their function of helping people to realize that there was a way out of their dilemma, and that way was through the cross of Christ. Now that Christ had come, there was no need for these particular laws. Compare Early Writings, page 33; Patriarchs and Prophets, page 365; Selected Messages, volume 1, page 239.

The cross brought a complete transition from Judaism to Christianity. Judaism with its involved system of sacrifices and commands concomitant with the sacrificial system was at an end. Moreover, the legal condemnation of the whole race was wiped away. The coming of Christ as the Savior to bear the sins of the people had been made absolutely necessary, not by the law but by the transgression of the law. Men and women, recognizing their inability to keep the law as they wanted to and ought to, had looked forward to the coming of a Deliverer by whose example and by the power of whose Spirit they would be able to live the way God desired them to live. Now that their bond of obligation was wiped away and nailed to the cross, and the special laws having to do with the Jewish nation and those foreshadowing the redeeming

work of the Messiah were at an end, they were to trust in Christ by faith not only for forgiveness of past sins but for strength to live a new life. In this new life they were to serve their Lord in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter; yet with the apostle Paul they could say, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:3 1).

Christ by His death triumphed over Satan and his angels. He provided a way of escape for men. In the new dispensation Christians were to resist false teachers who might insist that the Jewish ceremonial system was still binding upon them. The meat and drink offerings of the sacrificial system, the various holy days, such as the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, the new-moon feasts, and the yearly Sabbath days, all of which were shadows pointing forward to the coming of Christ, were no longer binding obligations upon Christians. Moreover, Christians were not to be misled by Gnostic teachers who were visiting the churches at Colossae, Ephesus, and many other places, urging upon the believers ascetic regulations concerning eating and drinking. Christians were forgiven men, and henceforth were to shape their lives after the example of Christ and in harmony with the clear teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

The key to Colossians 2:14-16 is the phrase "which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (verse 17). Martin's contention, however, is that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath is included in the shadow of things to come. Certainly he cannot point to any contextual or grammatical construction that would justify his contention. The seventh-day Sabbath was a memorial of God's creative power, pointing backward and not forward to Christ. Also the other nine commandments of the Ten Commandments by no manner or means have any function of "shadows" that point forward to Christ. They are enduring principles, statements of the way in which God asks His people to live. But in an effort to prove that the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments is included in the rites no longer binding upon Christians, Walter Martin cites various commentators who maintain that the word translated "Sabbath days" in Colossians 2:16 should be translated in the singular. The fact of the matter is that in the Greek this term is a plural, sabbaton, the nominative form of which is sabbata.

We recognize the fact that the Aramaic word for Sabbath in the singular was pronounced schabbatha and that many of the writers of the New Testament whose mother tongue was Aramaic used that form of the word when speaking of the Sabbath in the singular. We would not deny this, but we would merely reiterate the grammatical fact that in Colossians 2:16 the word is a plural and that Walter Martin can cite no grammatical reason why this word should not be translated as a plural ("Sabbath days") as it is translated in the King James, Version. This matter can only be decided by the context, and the immediate context, the basis upon which the whole interpretation of this passage hangs, is the phrase "which are a shadow of things to come." In the Greek the word which is a plural, agreeing with the plural "Sabbath days," as well as referring to the meat, drink, holy days, and new moons previously mentioned.

However, the ultimate decision rests upon this fact that the yearly Sabbath days of the Jewish system were shadows of things to come but that the weekly seventh-day Sabbath was not, by any manner or means, a shadow of things to come, and therefore cannot be included within Paul's statement. It is for this reason that we insist that the intention of the apostle was a plural "Sabbath days." Walter Martin states that "modern conservative scholarship establishes the singular rendering of 'Sabbath.'" The fact of the matter is that scholarship does not establish the singular rendering, but merely that it could have been singular as well as plural. However, the context shows that it could not be a singular.

Finally, Martin sums up his argument by stating that in Numbers 28 and 29, which lists the meat and drink offerings referred to in Colossians 2:16, 17, the seventh-day Sabbath is included. An examination of this passage discloses only that a description is included of the meat offerings and drink offerings that were made on the Sabbath day as well as the offerings on the annual Sabbaths or days of rest. This would be expected in a detailed listing of the meat offerings and drink offerings, but it would in no way indicate that the weekly Sabbath was a shadow pointing forward to the work of the coming Messiah, as did those numerous sacrifices and offerings that are being described in the two chapters.

The author concludes his argument with this statement: "Since these offerings and feasts have passed away as the shadow (skia), fulfilled in the substance (soma) of the cross of Christ, how can the seventh-day Sabbath be retained? In the light of this Scripture alone, this writer contends that the argument for Sabbath observance collapses, and the Christian stands under 'the perfect law of liberty' which enables him to fulfill 'the righteousness of the law' by the imperative of love." (Page 166)

We are at a loss to understand how our friend Walter Martin could seriously pen such a statement. In the first place, he has absolutely failed to show that the seventh-day Sabbath was a shadow of things to come, or that it in any way pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah. The Scriptures state emphatically

that the seventh-day Sabbath is a memorial of Creation, and that instead of pointing forward to the cross it points backward to God's creative act in making the earth in six days; and therefore God asked mankind to observe the seventh day as a day of rest and of worship, dedicated to the Creator of our lives and of all that we enjoy. We ask, What is there in the cross that would demand that the seventh day be put away?

The author asserts that the argument for Sabbath observance collapses and the Christian stands under the perfect law of liberty, which enables him to fulfill the righteousness of the law by the imperative of love. We fail to see any logic in this reasoning whatsoever. We also believe that the Sabbath keeper stands under the perfect law of liberty and that the grace of Christ enables him to fulfill the righteousness of the law, not by any effort to earn heaven by his own works, but by the full imperative of love. There is no value at all in the statement that the imperative of love would demand the doing away of the Sabbath any more than the imperative of love would demand that a person need no longer honor his father or mother or that the imperative of love gives men the liberty to steal, or to lie, or to commit adultery. God wants all His people to regard His law as the law of liberty, and to realize that they are not under a yoke of bondage in keeping it, but that they are to fulfill the righteous way of living described in the law out of love for their Creator. We stand amazed that anyone could seriously state that the imperative of love or the law of liberty would demand that we keep nine of the commandments but that the fourth commandment, embodied in the heart of the Ten Commandments, should be discarded.

We think it would have been well had Walter Martin here studied the context of this passage as he so often admonishes Adventists to do. Even a cursory reading of the book of Galatians shows that the apostle Paul wrote this book because the people of the churches of Galatia, under the influence of certain Judaizing teachers, were thinking that they could earn acceptance and justification before God by fulfilling all the various works and minutiae of Judaism (Galatians 2:16; 3:1-3). The apostle explicitly states that no one can be justified and saved by his own deeds, but that salvation comes as a free gift from Christ. Many of the Jews had come to feel that they could by their own efforts keep the laws of God, and their entire religion consisted of legalistic observances. Paul says that man's violations of the law had placed him under condemnation and that it was necessary for Christ to die in order that the debt for our transgressions be paid. One of the functions of the law is to point out to men their own shortcomings and convince them that they have not lived as God would have them live. In that sense the law makes men aware of their need of a Savior, to pay the debt of their sins and to help them live as God would have them live (Galatians 3:23-25).

Moreover, and this is the crux of the argument for the particular passage under discussion, the apostle shows that certain parts of the law itself pointed forward to Christ and to His vicarious death to pay for the transgressions of those who since the sin of Adam had rebelled against God. Paul points out that since Christ has come, those portions of God's law that were designed as teaching instruments to turn the attention of men to the coming of Christ, having completed their function now, have no part whatsoever in the Christian dispensation. The apostle emphasizes that lie had taught all these things to the Galatians. And he wonders why it is that they have allowed themselves to be bewitched, so that after having begun their spiritual pilgrimage by faith in Christ, and by trusting to the power of the Holy Spirit, they would now accept the teachings of Jewish legalists to the effect that men could earn acceptance with God by their observances of the law, and that every single element of the sacrificial system was still in force.

Within this context the apostle asks the Galatians: "But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." In other words, he says, "Now that Christ has come, are you still going to insist on keeping the Jewish holidays such as the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, et cetera, the function of which was to point forward to Christ? Christ has come, and these indicators and foreshadowers of the Messiah that served a function for people in bygone centuries have absolutely no further meaning or relevance to the Christian!" Ours is a life of faith, in which we trust in Christ for forgiveness of our sins as our divine Substitute, and in whom also we trust to find strength and power through His Holy Spirit to help us observe His enduring moral laws. We observe these perpetual moral laws not by any means to earn our salvation but because, being saved by grace alone, we love our Lord and want to live in harmony with His will for our lives. This, Paul says, is the liberty of the Christian faith. And we dare not become entangled in bondage to an outworn system, but rather we "stand fast . . . in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5: 1).

In spite of this clear intent of the book of Galatians, Walter Martin again attempts to show that Christian people have no need to observe the seventh-day Sabbath even though they do observe the other nine commandments. After having ignored the full intent of the book of Galatians, he accuses us, as he

discusses this passage, of ignoring the “grammar, context, and comparative textual analysis.” Furthermore, he says, “To substantiate their interpretation of Paul’s statements they do not practice exegesis (taking out of), but eisegesis (reading into) the texts.”¹⁴ We have already examined Paul’s statements in Galatians and find that the Adventist position is in full harmony with the context and textual analysis of the book of Galatians.

It is further asserted that the Septuagint translation of Numbers 28 and 29 refutes our doctrine of the Sabbath. We have examined these chapters in the Septuagint very carefully, and we wonder why it is that our friend Martin did not point out in these chapters what it was to which he had reference. He resorts again to his broad, sweeping statements without using proof, and attempts to convince his reader by his forthright assertions that he is right. A careful examination of Numbers 28 and 29 in either the Hebrew or the Septuagint shows that Moses is presenting at length the various sacrifices that were to be offered in the sanctuary at different times during the year. First are described the daily burnt offerings that are offered every day of the year, and the statement is made that on the seventh day the daily offering of lambs was doubled. This was part of the sanctuary regulations and has nothing whatsoever to do with the question as to whether Christians should observe the weekly Sabbath. The seventh day Sabbath was given at Creation and was observed for centuries before the sanctuary service was instituted as a temporary provision pointing the people forward to the coming of the Lamb of God to die to make atonement for their sins. It is completely irrelevant to introduce this argument as Mr. Martin does, saying that we ignore the grammar and the comparative textual analysis. As we search the remainder of these two chapters we find further descriptions of the offerings that were to be made at the time of the new moon, on the yearly Sabbaths, and on the various ceremonial feasts. No other mention is made of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Apparently Mr. Martin thought there are other references to the seventh-day Sabbath in these two chapters, such as in Numbers 28:25 and Numbers 29:32. If he will look at the context he will see that the reference to the “seventh day” in these passages refers to the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. These were both yearly Sabbaths and could fall on any day of the week. The holy convocations held on those days have nothing whatsoever to do with the seventh-day Sabbath. They were exactly the days, months, times, and years to which the apostle referred in Galatians 4:10. A study of these feast days will show that their function was to point forward to the coming of Christ, and that after Christ had come they had no use whatsoever. They were temporary laws designed for a teaching function to those people who lived before the Messiah had come. Now they are no part of the will of God for His people.

Thus the charge that our exegesis is an error falls completely to the ground. We have ignored neither grammar, context, nor comparative textual analysis. We would point out kindly but emphatically that it is Mr. Martin who has ignored the context and comparative textual analysis. In effect, he makes the apostle Paul contradict himself in 1 Corinthians 7:19, where the apostle states that circumcision, too, was part of Judaism and has no relevance for the Christian as far as religion is concerned. The apostle says, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.”¹⁵ The great apostle saw absolutely no contradiction in fulfilling God’s commandments through love and devotion for God. He assiduously taught the people that now that Jesus had come they should abandon, as outworn forms that had served their function, those ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. But he insisted that God’s laws, describing the way God desires His children to live, were established and strengthened by the faith that we have in Christ (Romans 3:31). When he told the Corinthian believers that circumcision was nothing, but that the thing of real value was the keeping of the commandments of God, he agreed fully with our Savior, who told His hearers: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom.” Our position is consistent in that it agrees with other statements of the apostle Paul and with the teachings of our Lord.

Martin concludes his discussion of Galatians 4 with the statement that Seventh-day Adventists “fail to realize that by trying to enjoin Sabbath observance upon other members of the body of Christ, they are in serious danger of transgressing the gospel of grace.” We would like to ask our friend Walter Martin if when we urge people not to commit adultery, which is the seventh commandment of the Ten Commandments, and when we urge them not to steal, which is the eighth commandment, we are also transgressing the gospel of grace and making legalists out of them? Undoubtedly he would answer No. Then we fail to understand how in teaching the fourth commandment we are transgressing the gospel of grace or making legalists out of those we teach.

Walter Martin says we should bear in mind that the law in its larger connotation includes the Pentateuch. This is true; in its larger connotations it also includes the entire Old Testament, for Paul himself quoted the book of Isaiah and referred to it as the law. (See 1 Corinthians 14:21 and Isaiah 28:11.) Martin goes on to say that one is “under the law” when he attempts to observe any part of the Pentateuch, because the Christian has been freed from the law. Does he mean to say that no part of the Pentateuch represents the will of God for His people today? Are we not to love God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves? Or should we discard this command because it is in the Pentateuch? If a person is free to violate the seventh-day Sabbath, why is he not free to violate the other nine commandments of the Ten Commandments?

8. Anti-Sabbath Texts Continued

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Romans 13:8-10

IN A DISCUSSION of Romans 13:8-10 the author under review says in the present passage the Holy Spirit twice declares that love fulfills the law. They [Seventh-day Adventists] cannot exempt the Sabbath from this context without destroying the unity of the ‘Eternal Ten,’ hence their dilemma.” He continues, “How any student of New Testament Greek could read the unmistakable language of the apostle and then exclude the Sabbath commandment from his argument, passes my understanding.” Mr. Martin builds up a straw man and feels good about having demolished it. Seventh day Adventists are the people who down through the years have valiantly stood for the unity of the “Eternal Ten.” It is Mr. Martin and men like him who would say that a Christian should live in harmony with nine of the commandments but that he is free to violate the fourth. Seventh-day Adventists are not in any dilemma, but those who would try to remove from the Ten Commandments the fourth commandment are. We do not exclude the Sabbath commandment from the great commandment of love.

In discussing this passage, however, Mr. Martin has apparently forgotten the words of Jesus: “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). The law of love was fully enunciated in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Leviticus 19:18). Love fulfilled the law in Old Testament times, even at the time the Ten Commandments were given, just as well as it does now. The basic principle back of the first four commandments of the Ten Commandments is “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” These first four commandments help people to understand that the principle of love to God means that they shall not have any other god besides the Lord, that they shall not worship images of other gods, that they shall not take the name of God in vain, and that they shall remember God’s Sabbath day to keep it holy. Jesus said that this great commandment to love the Lord is the greatest of all the commandments, and the first four of the Ten Commandments merely spell out more fully what is included in it.

The commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself is described by Jesus as the “second” commandment. The last six commandments of the Ten Commandments spell out more fully the principle of loving one’s neighbor as oneself. A person who loves his neighbor in this way certainly will first of all honor his parents; he will not kill anyone, but respect his neighbor’s life. He will not commit adultery, respecting his neighbor’s person; he will not steal, respecting his neighbor’s property; neither will he bear false witness nor covet that which is his neighbor’s, because he is to love his neighbor as himself. In other words, the “second” commandment, “Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself,” does not abrogate any of the last six commandments of the Ten Commandments. It merely comprehends them and is the over-all principle concerning the application of which these six commandments give us further instruction. By the same principle the first commandment to love God with all the heart does not abrogate any one of the first four commandments, for they are included in its over-all principle. We do not see that Adventists face any dilemma here.

One who examines the context of Romans 13:8-10 will note that in this section of the book of