

A Joint Statement of Brotherly Love by David Clayton and Adrian Ebens

Adrian Ebens in BLACK

David Clayton in RED

January 9, 2014.

Over recent months it has become obvious that there are some very key differences of understanding of the Scriptures between David and myself. We have tried a number of times to see if we can harmonize our thinking. We have both prayed about these differences and have hoped for a path that would lead to unity. At this present time we have not been able to come to agreement. In most cases when brethren have serious differences that cannot be reconciled, it usually leads to a breakdown in friendship. Neither David nor I believe this is what Christ would wish us to do. As we both worship the One God and are convicted to preach the glorious gospel of His only begotten Son, we choose to have faith that our Father can bring us into harmony in His own way, while for us, we presently cannot see a clear path.

In order to maintain our friendship we felt it best to put out a joint statement indicating the challenges we face as we see them and what concerns we have and then commit these to the Lord for His guidance.

To all our brethren that support and pray for our ministries, we ask you to pray for us, that we will be submissive to the Spirit of Christ and that He would reveal to each of us the path we need to walk in order to come into harmony with each other.

Affirmation

I want to take this opportunity to affirm my brother David and express my gratitude for his tireless ministry. I believe that God has raised up David and His close companion Howard Williams to point people to the One true God and His only Begotten Son. I believe both these men have been called to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and I pray that our Father will bless them and strengthen their hands in this critical work. I remember with fondness the time that both David and Howard visited my home. The fellowship we shared was a real blessing and their conduct and manners were of the highest Christian integrity. I know that our Lord Jesus loves my brothers and therefore I love them also in the Spirit of our Master.

I also want to take the opportunity to express my appreciation for my brother Adrian and the spirit of genuine love, concern and tolerance which he has displayed in our discussions. I can say sincerely that from the beginning I have not found anything but the utmost sincerity in his dealings with me, even in the midst of troubling disagreements. I have not had any reason to doubt that he means only the best for me. I also appreciate the work he is doing and recognize that he has a pastor's heart. I believe that God has called him to his present ministry and recognize that he is able to work in ways that are not possible for me.

Points at Issue

In regard to our doctrinal differences I would point out a number of key areas. It is important to raise these issues with openness and grace that we might continue to pray for each other specifically and allow those who support us to pray for us and contact if they believe they have light to help or help us see where we are saying the same things in different ways.

We have found a difference of our understanding of the platform of truth given to our pioneers. It is my understanding that our pioneers were granted to lay a solid immovable platform. Critical to this platform is the beginning of the Investigative Judgment on October 22, 1844 where the work of final atonement began in the judgment of the dead and would culminate in the judgment and final atonement of the living. It is my understanding that the work of sanctification is progressive where the Spirit of God and the Word of God transform the life into the image of the Son of God. I believe that Jesus literally intercedes before the Father asking Him for the forgiveness of our sins and for grace and power to be given to the saints. I believe this intercession of asking is not because God does not wish to give but that we might have in Jesus an example our complete dependence on God.

In my discussions with David, I currently understand (I will be quick to admit any errors of understanding on my part if I have misunderstood) that he sees that the pioneers made great advances in truth and came a long way in their understanding but that they did not have everything right. Exactly what they did not have right is not clear to me, but I understand him to believe that the pioneers had errors in their understanding of the investigative judgment because the anti-type has extended to 170 years which appears to conflict with the type which occurred in one day each year.

To be accurate, my issue is not with the investigative judgment, although I believe there are perspectives and ideas associated with it which are wrong. My issue is with the **day of atonement** extending for 170 years. I know that in Adventism the Investigative judgment and the day of atonement are understood to be inextricably intertwined. Yes that is my understanding However, I am not persuaded that this is necessarily correct. I don't find the Scriptural support for this convincing.

I believe there is a pre-Advent investigative judgment because I find much evidence for this in the Bible although I don't like the understanding which many Adventists have of it, and the reasons given for it. I also accept that this judgment process has been ongoing for many decades. However, I believe that in the type, the day of Atonement was one day, no more, and in all the feast day types which were already fulfilled, one day types were fulfilled in the same time period - exactly one day. I find it inconsistent to say that the type was one day long, but the antitype has been 170 years so far and still counting.

I have understood David to believe that when Christ dwells in the heart by faith that sanctification places the sinner in a state of having no more struggle with sin. But I do believe we still have a struggle with faith. I believe our fight is legitimately "the good fight of faith." When we rest in Christ, it is true that "he that is dead is freed from sin," but it is resting in Him by faith which is our legitimate challenge. I am uncertain if this is similar to instantaneous sanctification but that is the sense of how I understand it. I understand David to emphasize the wonderful truth that Christ dwells in us literally by His Spirit. I also rejoice in this wonderful truth and thank David for this emphasis. My emphasis is to keep the Divine Pattern of the Living Word and the Written Word together.

I understand that David and I have a difference in understanding of the Law and the covenants. While I accept there are clear changes in the mode of access to grace before and after the cross, the gospel itself remains unchanged and is indeed the everlasting gospel. I understand David to teach that the gospel did not begin until Christ came. **I would prefer to say that the gospel did not become a reality until Christ came. Before He came it was promised, men believed in a salvation which was to come and died with the expectation of someday receiving it. After Christ came, we experience that salvation, it is no longer a promise, it is reality. We already possess eternal life, before Christ came, this was only a promise. They died in hope, we live in the reality of what they hoped for.** I have understood that he believes Christianity did not exist until Christ came to earth and that the children of Israel were placed under a system of law to restrain sin until the Messiah should come. So in summary I understand the covenants to be primarily parallel as represented in Hagar and Sarah with an acknowledgement that there was a change in access in the New Testament or dispensation. I understand David to teach that the covenants are primarily dispensational meaning that the Old covenant was essentially a system of law given to Israel until Christ came and that John 1:17 places the Law and Grace in a contrasted state rather than a complimentary one. I see the grace of Christ in a Divine Pattern relationship with the Law. Christ is the Law expressed and therefore they are complimentary not grace versus the law. Therefore I believe that all the moral principles contained in the Law of Moses are not shadowy types that passed away with the sacrifices and oblations that ceased at the cross, but these principles provide the same blessings today as was promised to Israel in Deut 26-28.

I believe there is a literal Sanctuary in heaven with literal furniture, literal walls and that all things on earth were made as a copy of what was in heaven. I believe there is a literal and original copy of the Law of God written on stone in the Most Holy Place. In the principles of the Divine Pattern where Jesus is the image of His Father, I believe the earthly sanctuary to be an image of the heavenly. While there might be minor differences in details, the point is the Sanctuary in material and literal; as literal and as material as the God who sits upon the throne. I understand that David is not focused on whether these things are literal or not but the emphasis is upon the spiritual meaning of these things. **I cannot accept that literal incense is being offered in heaven, nor that there is literal bread on a table in heaven, nor a literal 7- branched candlestick. I believe these represented spiritual realities, not literal replicas of themselves.** I believe in the spiritual manifested through the literal. We shall eat from the Tree of life in heaven as a channel of the Life we receive from Christ. **For example the candlestick represented the holy spirit. I don't believe the holy spirit, which is Christ's own presence is represented by a piece of golden furniture in heaven. I believe ritualism and form was limited to type, in heaven we deal with the realities, not the symbols. We need to understand the spiritual reality of what is happening in heaven.**

I believe that the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy are in a Divine Pattern relationship with the Word of God. The Spirit of Prophecy has no authority of its own but what it derives from the Word of God. For believers in the Third Angel's message the Spirit of Prophecy is a safe guide that always leads us to the Word of God. I have full confidence in quoting it to my fellow labourers and whatever doctrines I hold from Scripture, I believe we will see those same things expanded in the Spirit of Prophecy which in these last days I understand to be the published writings of Ellen G. White. I understand David's desire to settle doctrinal questions on the Bible alone and I appreciate this emphasis but I see no disharmony in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy and I do not see in her published writings that she made mistakes to place potential doubt concerning the authority of her

writings. My perspective is not the same. I have encountered a few statements in the writings of Ellen White which I can neither accept nor explain. I have difficulty in depending on something which I feel has let me down on occasion. Some of these statements have to do with the issue of the Trinity, others have to do with the issue of law and grace, others have to do with church organization and a few other things. I only feel perfectly safe when I am standing on the Bible, so this is what I have chosen to do.

While this has not been widely canvassed or discussed in much detail, I understand that there is a difference on the question of the Daily of the book of Daniel. This difference is not a cause for conflict but it does highlight a difference in methodology and does have ramifications for Oct 22 1844 and the investigative judgment that are not immediately obvious. I am raising this point not in direct response to David but for all the brethren that we might pray and ask the Lord what is His will on these questions. I want to be guided by our Father and I believe that coming together in an intelligent understanding on the Daily would address a number of other points, but this is simply my understanding and I offer as a footnote not a major point. I believe that brother Blair Andrew also raised this point in a recent letter to a number of the brethren. I agree with what Blair has indicated and along with him raise this for further study.

My concerns

My concerns that arise out of these differences are that there is a stepping off the solid platform given to our pioneers and that this gives the sense that the platform was laid wrongly. I accept David's concern that he feels that I am stuck in an Adventist mindset and therefore not free to stand alone upon the Bible as an individual understand free of any other man.

I am also concerned about the teaching that the system of law given to Israel was a system of works to restrain sin until the Messiah came. In my mind this creates two gospels and it brings into question the character of God as just and fair and unchangeable in His dealings with men. I accept David's concern that the wonderful light of the gospel as revealed in the person of Jesus could be diminished by an emphasis on the gospel in the Old Testament but I see the New Testament as an expansion and expression of the Old not a replacement for it. My understanding is that God placed the Hebrew nation under the system of the law, the Old Covenant, not the New Covenant, because they were spiritual children. In that state of childhood, they were treated as "servants," that is, they were placed under tutors and governors (the law) as a means of training and controlling them in preparation for the time when God's people would enter into the experience of maturity or adulthood, with the coming of the Messiah. I don't see this as indicative of a change in God's mind or in His dealings. I see it as simply a demonstration of the fact that God deals with people where they are and according to their needs, and the dictates of the circumstances. When God's people were spiritual children, God dealt with them by a system designed for the immature. When the time came that they were ready for the stage of adulthood, God initiated them into the more perfect way

I am concerned that the emphasis on dispensational covenants is working in conflict with the most precious message given to Elders Jones and Waggoner and therefore is at odds with the message of Justification by faith that will produce a people that keep all the commandments of God by the faith OF Jesus.

I am also concerned for the potential cloud that is placed of the Spirit of prophecy and that maybe we can't have full confidence in Ellen White's own published writings.

I am concerned that Adrian's view of the two covenants and of the place of the law, leads in the direction of the Old Covenant and logically, leads to the place where the practices of the Old Testament become integrated into Christian worship. I am concerned by the fact that many among us in the godhead movement have already embraced feast-keeping along with other practices associated with the law of Moses. I believe this is a logical course to take if we hold to the understanding which Adrian maintains and I feel that this understanding is not what the New Testament presents.

I am also concerned that Adrian's commitment to the Seventh day Adventist foundation teachings and his concept that the teachings of Ellen White are always correct, has led him to overlook or to ignore some serious problems with Adventist interpretations and it seems to me at times that he is more committed to Adventism than he is to the Bible. Adrian says that he has this attitude because he has tested Adventism by the Bible and found it stands the test in every way. I have not found this to be the case.

Liberty of Expression.

I write these things as an expression of what I understand in sincerity and I pray in truth. If there are errors and dangers in what I have written I give David full permission to write and speak his prayerful warnings against them without threat of loss of friendship or fellowship. I cherish the basic right of each man to follow His own conscience and not be silenced by some vain hope of unity that is afraid to openly discuss different understandings. I accept that this open discussion may cause pain for some new to the faith but this is something that needs to be discussed not with the threat of "disfellowship" but with the earnest desire to come to the truth while maintaining a spirit of love for each other and a trust that our Father will help us if we refuse to let each other go. I choose to believe David has my best interest at heart and that anything he would write in response to me would be done because of his love for me as his brother. I also wish to give David full freedom to discuss with others the points I have raised without fear of being considered talking behind my back.

I endorse all that is said here. It expresses my own position one hundred percent.

Confession

I think it is important to confess that I had previously reached the point of believing that I must raise my voice against David and openly warn people against Him. As I prayed on my knees, the Lord convicted me that my thoughts were not his thoughts and that I needed to be more like Jesus. I am reminded of these words:

Luke 9:54-55 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? (55) But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

I confess that I was in danger of walking this very path and I thank the Lord for helping me to see this error on my part. David, my brother I am sorry I came to the place where I felt I needed to distance

myself from you and warn people against you. I was wrong for allowing these thoughts. I choose to believe the Lord can help us and I want to be quick to acknowledge my errors where I have made them and walk in all the light of God's Word.

Conclusion

Above all other things I want everyone who reads this to know that I consider David Clayton a dear brother and I have determined to remain his friend always. I have faith that as we worship the One God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He can unite our hearts not only in love but in truth. I acknowledge that I have believed many wrong things in the past that there are things still that need to change in my life. I never want to be in the place where I simply assume I am right and my brother is wrong. Lord save me from such self-assurance. **This is also a full expression of what I feel and what I am resolved to do. May God keep us both true to this purpose.**

To all the believers around the world who love the Father and the Son, I again ask you to pray for us and join us in praying together for the Spirit of love and grace and wisdom to know how to address this current difference of understanding.

Lord Jesus, please send us your Spirit that we may be one as you and the Father are one. Let this declaration of brotherly love triumph over current differences and lead us to where you want us to be as blood bought children of the Father of lights. **Amen and amen!**