

**Correspondence of Everlasting Covenant Chart by Skip MacCarty and
Ellen White's Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 32, "The Law and the Covenants"**

1. 363:1-2
 - a. PP – "The Law" was written on the heart of Adam, and the "Ten Commandments" (TC) were known by Noah and Abraham and taught to their descendants.
 - b. EC – Agrees. Also, Deut 4:12-13 calls God's Sinai covenant the Ten Commandments (TC). So, Adam, Noah, Abraham were aware of the moral essence of the Sinai covenant.

2. 364:1
 - a. PP – TC written on stone to help Israel remember them. God expanded on what He had given to Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. because Israel had shown themselves easily led astray. The additional laws given on Sinai, other than the services related to the sanctuary, were expansions on how the TC should be applied in their relation to God, each other, and the stranger. Because Israel was prone to forget God's requirements, He wrote them in stone.
 - b. EC – Agrees. Additionally, the Sinai covenant was necessitated by the fact that Israel was now an entire nation and needed civil laws and penalties to maintain social order, health laws to foster community health, and expanded ritual to recall God's activity in the events of their national history and to point forward even more specifically to the mission of His Messiah to come.

3. 364:2
 - a. PP – If people had kept God's law, there would have been no need for circumcision or the TC written down at Sinai as they were.
 - b. EC – Does not disagree.

4. 364:3
 - a. PP – The Sacrificial system had also been perverted over the centuries, so at Sinai more definite instruction was given regarding the ceremonial law.
 - b. EC – Does not disagree.
 - c. 364:1,3 agrees with Gal. 3:19 "Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come." The "transgressions" in this context included their proneness to forget His requirements and their perversion of the sacrificial system.

5. 365:1-3
 - a. PP – The Ceremonial law and TC can't be treated as the same law. The ceremonial was provisional, the TC "immutable."
 - b. EC – Agrees.

6. 365:4
 - a. PP – “Never has He given to the sons of men more open manifestations of His power and glory than when He alone was acknowledged as Israel's ruler, and gave the law to His people” at Sinai.
 - b. EC – Agrees when viewed in the progressive revelation perspective of the OT. This is an example of the importance of reading Ellen White in a wider context. In other places in her writings, DA especially, she is very clear that Jesus was God’s ultimate revelation, even if that is not stated as such at this point. She would never want the thought expressed in the present paragraph to be taken as her last word on this subject.

7. 366:1
 - a. PP – All through the ages of salvation history which began at the Fall God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Adam through Moses all “understood the gospel.”
 - b. EC – Agrees.

8. 366:2 – 367:1
 - a. PP – All the OT, including the Law, was given by Christ and testifies to Christ.
 - b. EC – Agrees. Jesus was active as Creator and Redeemer all through the OT. He came to earth as Yahweh incarnate.

9. 367:2
 - a. PP – The ceremonial law was given by Christ and “typified the truths to be revealed through successive generations.”
 - b. EC – Agrees.

10. 367:3
 - a. PP – Jesus is the light that has spiritually enlightened everyone who has ever come into the world.
 - b. EC – Agrees.

11. 367:4 - 368:0
 - a. PP – God has progressively revealed the truths of salvation throughout the ages.
 - b. EC – Agree.

12. 368:1 – 370:1
 - a. PP – God’s people from the earliest times to this very day were to be missionaries to the rest of the world, to be the light of the world, not to hold the truth exclusively to themselves. “It was their evil heart of unbelief, controlled by Satan, that led them to hide their light” and “shut themselves away in proud exclusiveness.”
 - b. EC – Agrees.

13. 370:2

- a. PP – As there are two laws—one changeless, eternal; the other provisional, temporary—so there are two covenants.
 - i. The “covenant of grace” was made with man in Eden after the fall. It offered:
 - 1. “Pardon”
 - 2. “Assisting grace of God for further obedience for faith in Christ”
 - 3. “Promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God’s law.”
 - ii. On the basis of these three provisions of “the covenant of grace” as stated in “i.” above Ellen White says, “thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.”
- b. EC – Agrees.
 - i. The “covenant of grace” was the first one of the “two covenants” she was referring to, the one that was “changeless and eternal.” This appears to be God’s everlasting covenant which she refers to elsewhere though not in this chapter, adapted to meet humanity in its fallen condition and restore to them all that Adam had lost on behalf of humanity. It spans from the fall of man to the second coming of Jesus. Peter M. van Bemmelen writes: “In an article entitled ‘Christ our Hope’ (ST 8-24-1891), [Ellen G. White] places side by side the expressions ‘covenant of redemption,’ ‘covenant of grace,’ and ‘everlasting covenant,’ and appears to use them as synonyms.”¹ He then quotes from the ST Aug, 24, 1891 article: “The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed in the mind of God from all eternity. This is why it is called the everlasting covenant.” He further quotes EGW from ST Jun 12, 1901: “The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity.”
 - ii. Note that the “covenant of grace” in Ellen White’s understanding includes the NC promises specified in Jer 31 and Heb 8, even though she doesn’t quote those verses (the following quotes are again from PP 370:2 unless otherwise noted:
 - 1. “Pardon” = Promise 4, forgiveness.
 - 2. “Assisting grace of Christ for obedience” = could equate to Promise 1, writing His law on our hearts.
 - 3. In 368:1 – 370:1 she had an extended discussion of the mission of all believers in OT and NT = Promise 3, related to God’s self-revelation and the mission of His people to share that revelation until it is no longer needed.

¹ Peter M. van Bemmelen, “The Everlasting Covenant,” an unpublished paper presented in a PhD seminar on The Theology of the Old and New covenants, at the Andrews University Seminary, Sept 26, 2012.

4. "Promise of eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law" = could possibly be equated with Promise 2, Reconciliation. If not, the whole theme of this chapter is the reconciliation of God and His people through the revelation given in His law and covenants, and Jesus' decisive role in the entire revelation and mission.
- iii. In essence, through faith in the promises of the new covenant as defined in Jer 31 and Heb 8, "the patriarchs received the hope of salvation."
- c. Though PP and EC express these concepts with slightly differing language, they both express the same truths about the Everlasting Covenant/Covenant of Grace.

14. 370:3 - 370:4

- a. PP – The "covenant of grace" was "renewed" to Abraham who "trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins."
 - i. "It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness."
 - ii. The "covenant of grace" was not ratified until the death of Christ. "When ratified by Christ it is called a *new* covenant."
- b. EC – Agrees.
 - i. God's covenant with Abraham was a renewal of the covenant of grace first made with Adam and Eve and their descendants at the Fall (Gen 3:15).
 - ii. The covenant of grace, and thus all covenants (including the Abrahamic covenant) that were part of its progressive revelation and progressive working out of the divine plan of salvation as it unfolded throughout history, was ratified provisionally by animal sacrifices with each covenant given in the OT, but made efficacious with the once-for-all ratification of the covenant of grace by "the blood of the eternal covenant" (Heb 13:20) shed by Jesus on Calvary.
 - iii. [Parenthetical observation: Beyond even our own world, this atoning act of Jesus brought reconciliation to "all things," "things on earth and things in heaven" (Col 1:20)! Ellen White herself makes this application elsewhere.]

At this point in PP the agreement with EC is not as readily discernible, but upon closer investigation their correspondence becomes evident.

Bear in mind that this covenant seminar addresses questions raised by Evangelical scholars and former SDA ministers who have left the church over issues related to the old and new covenants. Therefore, it organizes its material and employs language directly related to those interpretations and the questions they raise.

Ellen White never directly addressed the polemical issues in the primary passages we have been studying—Gal 3:15-25; 4:21-5:1; 2 Cor 3; Rom 6:14; 7:1-6; etc. She addressed issues being discussed in the Seventh-day Adventist church of her day. This is especially true in PP Chapter 32. Most of our theologians interpreted the NT polemical passages just referred to on the law and covenants in exclusively historical terms. Jones and Waggoner came to the point where they interpreted those same passages in exclusively experiential terms. Ellen White sided with Waggoner, especially in her emphasis

on the experiential application of the old covenant, but she never denied that there was an historical application as well.

This current seminar of the old and new covenants, based on the book *In Granite and Ingrained: What the Old and New covenants Reveal about the Gospel, the Law and the Sabbath*, seeks to demonstrate the validity of both the historical and the experiential perspectives, and how they aid in the interpretation of the passages noted above. Even though Ellen White uses different terminology from that used in this covenant seminar, a prayerful consideration of the following analysis of the noted PP paragraphs and the Everlasting Covenant chart advanced by this seminar will reveal the essential harmony between them. The resulting synthesis represents the most coherent theology of the covenants set forth anywhere to date.

15. 371:1

- a. PP – “Another compact—called in Scripture the ‘old’ covenant—
 - i. “was formed between God and Israel at Sinai,
 - ii. “and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice.”
 - iii. “The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the ‘second,’ or ‘new,’ covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant.”
 - iv. Proof that “the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham” is that “it was confirmed both by the promise and the oath of God” (Heb 6:18).
- b. EC – Agrees, given the following explanation:
 - i. Note that the other or second “compact” she discusses, and which she calls the “old covenant,” “second covenant,” “*was formed between God and Israel* at Sinai.” She never uses that terminology to refer to other covenants God made. So, she has something else in mind here than a strict Above the Line application, though God is very much involved. It is *not merely a human covenant* made with God, but a covenant made “*between God and Israel.*” There seem to be both Above the Line and Below the Line applications involved here.
 - ii. In theology, the way certain truths are expressed is sometimes determined by whatever issues or conflicts on those theological points are being discussed. The current EC chart is expressing eternal truths with terms and diagrams specifically adapted to meet current issues and theological challenges being leveled by both the evangelical world and former SDA ministers against the Sabbath truth. Ellen White may not have been addressing those same issues in PP chapter 32 and that may account for some of the differences in terminology, although the same underlying concepts and truths can be discerned in both presentations.
 - iii. The PP comparison of the “‘old’ covenant [that] was formed between God and Israel at Sinai and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice,” with “the Abrahamic covenant [that] was ratified by the blood of Christ” has to keep in mind that all the patriarchs from Abel to Jacob offered sacrifices as part of their covenant relationship with God. Every covenant God ever made with humanity prior to the cross was provisional and

prefigured “the blood of the eternal covenant” yet to come for its final ratification (Heb 13:20). The sacrifices initially and provisionally ratifying both the Sinaitic *and* Abrahamic covenants are no different in that respect.

- iv. When PP says that “the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham” does not necessarily mean that the new covenant was not valid in the days of the Sinaitic covenant, or not characteristic of the Sinaitic covenant. If the Sinaitic covenant is viewed strictly from an Above the Line perspective, it has to be understood as an expression, indeed as the supreme expression up to that time, of the covenant of grace. The Sinai covenant not only contained all four of the promises God used to define the new covenant (Jer 31:33-34; Heb 8:8-10), but three of the four show up for the first time in Scripture in the Sinai covenant!² Ellen White is not denying the grace-based and gospel-bearing qualities of the Sinai covenant viewed from a strict Above the Line perspective, as God gave the covenant to His people. Otherwise she could not have affirmed: “The covenant that God made with His people at Sinai is to be our refuge and defense.... This covenant is of just as much force today as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel” (1BC 1103; SW Mar 1, 1904).

16. 371:2-3

- a. PP – Why is another covenant needed at Sinai since the Abrahamic covenant (and the others before it) already contained the promise of redemption?
 - i. The people had lost the “true conception of the holiness of God”
 - ii. The people had lost the sense of: the “exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, the utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Savior.”
- b. EC – Agrees. And adds that the Sinai covenant was also a major addition to God’s own progressive self-revelation in the unfolding plan of salvation through the ages.

17. 371:4 – 372:1

- a. PP –
 - i. 371:4 – gave His law at Sinai “with the promise of great blessing on condition of obedience [Exod 19:5-6 quoted]. “
 - ii. 372:1 “The terms of the ‘old covenant’ were, Obey and live: [Eze 20:11; Lev 18:5; Deut 27:26 quoted].”
- b. EC – Agrees, with these additional insights added:
 - i. The statements just quoted, rather than marking the Sinai covenant as different from the everlasting covenant/covenant of grace/ new covenant, they demonstrate its solidarity with it.

² See In Granite or Ingrained: *What the Old and New Covenants Reveal About the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), chapter 4.

- ii. PP 370:2 identifies the covenant of grace, as expressed in the previous covenants (Adam, Noah, Abraham) as one that “promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God’s law.” That is the very principle of “Obey and live” which also characterized the Sinai covenant. They were one and the same. The Sinai covenant was a progressively expanded expression of the covenant of grace, viewed from an Above the Line perspective. And yet Ellen White seems to portray the Sinai covenant as “formed between God and Israel” as a different covenant from the covenant of grace.
- iii. It must be that if the conditional provision—Blessing and life if you obey—is responded to one way (i.e., legalistically, “I will do this in my own power”) it is ‘old covenant’, but when responded to in another way (i.e., faith and dependence on Jesus righteousness and His enabling grace for obedience) it is new covenant! This is exactly the point of the EC chart and all that it represents. Ellen White is not saying something different.
- iv. The “two covenants” Ellen White seems to be contrasting in this chapter are the “covenant of grace” and the covenant “formed between God and Israel.” And yet she characterizes the terms of both covenants in exactly the same way (covenants prior to Sinai grant “eternal life on condition of fidelity to God’s law”; Sinai covenant based on “obey and live” principle). So, Above the Line they are based on everlasting covenant principles—eternal life based on obedience, forgiveness for disobedience based on a sacrifice God will provide. But when the Below the Line human response is factored in, it can change how a covenant is viewed and described. In the same way that the holy law of God, which responded to in faith is “the law of the Spirit of Life,” when responded to with a sinful-nature-generated unbelief and legalism converts that same law into a “law of sin and death,” (Rom 7:12-8:2), the Sinai covenant when responded to in faith under the influence of the Holy Spirit is a covenant of grace and redemption, but when responded to with unbelief or legalistically, under the influence of the sinful nature can only be understood as an “old covenant,” resulting in an “old covenant experience” whose end is condemnation and death.
- v. This very point is illustrated in the different ways Ellen White assesses the nature of the response Israel made to God’s covenant with them. In PP 371:4 she writes: “Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, ‘All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient. Exodus 24:7.’” She was here assessing their response in light of a motivation that represented an old covenant experience of legalism and self-reliance, as exhibited a short time later when Israel made the golden calf.³ But in another context she quotes Exodus 19:7-8, “Moses ...set before them all the

³ Cf., Deut 5:24, 27-29: “...you said,...‘Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will listen and obey.’ The Lord heard you when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, ‘I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. ²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!’”

words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, ‘We will do everything the Lord has said’; and then she immediately comments: “This is the pledge that God’s people are to make in these last days” (SDABC, 7A:1103 [RH, June 23, 1904]). Her appeal in this latter comment is obviously for a faith-based response characteristic of a new covenant experience that includes a wholehearted willingness to obey God fully, but relying wholly upon the abiding presence of Jesus in them to enable and empower their obedience. She thus acknowledges that the same verbal response may represent an old covenant experience of sinful-nature-generated self-reliance on the one hand, or a new covenant experience of faith and dependence on God and His forgiving and enabling grace on the other.

- c. PP – 371:4 Since Israel “did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law, *they readily entered into covenant with God*. Feeling they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, ‘All that the Lord hath said well we do, and be obedient’ (Exodus 24:7).” (emphasis added).
- d. EC – Agrees
 - i. The very self-reliant spirit expressed here converted the Sinai expression of the covenant of grace into an old covenant of works!
 - ii. Paul says that Abraham himself did the same thing with the covenant of grace God made with him when he had a son with Hagar rather than trusting God’s promise—Paul uses this Below the Line response of Abraham as an example of old covenant (Gal 4:21ff.) So God had to renew His covenant with Abraham in Gen 17 just as He did with Israel in Exod 34:10ff.
- e. PP – 371.4 continues: Then when Israel fell, “seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Savior revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now bound by faith and love to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin, they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant.”
- f. EC – Agrees. “The blessings of the new covenant” were embedded and expanded on in the Sinai covenant itself. That is why the Psalmists often express their love for God’s law. The law, commandments, statutes, testimonies so beautifully extolled in Psalm 119 referred especially to those of the Sinai covenant. The Sinai covenant embraced all the spiritual truth (including required obedience, forgiving grace, enabling grace, etc.—all the everlasting covenant/covenant of grace/new covenant provisions) revealed in previous covenants (with Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc.) and added additional revelation from God.

- g. PP 372:1
 - i. “The ‘new covenant’ was established upon ‘better promises’—
 - ii. “the promise of forgiveness of sins and of
 - iii. “the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God’s law [Jer 31:33-34 quoted, especially the first and fourth of the new covenant promises].”
- h. EC – Agrees.
 - i. But note that the very promises referred to here, forgiveness of sins and God writing His law on their hearts, were first enunciated in Scripture in the Sinai covenant (e.g., Exod 34:7; Deut 6:4; 30:6, 11-14), not in any previous covenant explicitly. And in 370:2 Ellen White acknowledges these very provisions as key characteristics of the covenant of grace. While in this particular paragraph she does not parse out the Above-the-Line (historical) and Below-the-Line (experiential) dimensions of the old and new covenants as explicitly as we might like, a careful reading of it, especially in light of her previous discussion of the law and covenants in this chapter as noted above, can discern both the historical and experiential dimensions at play here. Ellen White is very clear that the Sinai covenant contained the full gospel, and on that basis continues with “just as much force today as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel” (1BC 1103; SW Mar 1, 1904). Similarly, people today can respond to its gospel message, or the NT’s gospel message for that matter, in an old covenant way of unbelief or legalism and fail to be redeemed by it.
 - ii. Evidently, the majority in Israel first perceived the Sinai expression of the covenant of grace as a covenant of works, an “old covenant” if you please, and responded accordingly. It was only after they saw their own sinfulness and turned to Christ as their Savior that they could then see the Sinai covenant from an Above the Line perspective as a covenant of grace and mercy.

18. 372:2 – 373:1

- a. PP – Further explanations of the everlasting covenant principles of the covenant of grace that operated throughout the plan of salvation, including a further clarification of the relationship of faith and law, and grace and law.
- b. EC – Agrees. Those principles have never changed throughout the history of the plan of salvation and are indeed embedded into every covenant God ever made with humankind.

19. 373:2

- a. PP – A powerful reiteration of the principle of progressive revelation as it pertains to the gospel being increasingly unfolded through the ages, thus maintaining the unity and coherence of the plan of salvation in “both dispensations” (OT and NT).
- b. EC – Agrees.