Adventist Today

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What Is An Adventist?

FOUR VIEWS

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What Is An Adventist? FOUR VIEWS

features

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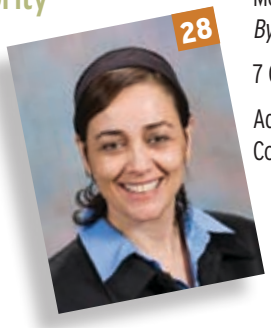

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What Is An Adventist?

J. David Newman

Fifteen years ago *Adventist Today* published four articles on four "wings" of Adventism (January/February 1994). In the words of the various authors, those articles described "Mainstream Adventism," "Evangelical Adventism," "Progressive Adventism," and "Historic Adventism." In this issue, *Adventist Today* again publishes four views on Adventism but with a twist. Each of the authors gets to critique what the others have written.

The assignment was uncomplicated and the same for each one. They were to write the answer to a simple question: What is an Adventist? Larry Christoffel and Larry Kirkpatrick are pastors. Charles Scriven is a college president, and Sari Fordam is a college professor.

Read their articles and their responses and then send in your definition of what is an Adventist. There is even room in future issues for a short article on the subject, if you feel so inspired.

George R. Knight has just published his latest book: *The Apocalpytic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (reviews to follow in next issue). Knight, who has written 19 books, considers this book to be the most important of his career. The first sentence in his book says, "Why be Adventist?" His book and this special issue of *Adventist Today* explore the same theme.

Adventist Dilemma

The Adventist Church labors under an enormous dilemma. It sprang into being to proclaim the Second Coming of Jesus. Just as John the Baptist lived to see what he proclaimed—the first coming of Jesus—so too were those who proclaimed the imminent return of Jesus supposed to see him come.

Ellen White says: "Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, … the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward" (*Maranatha,* p. 61).

The 1976 Annual Council voted a document called "Evangelism and Finishing the Work." It defined "finishing the work" as "both an inward and outward work—a people saved by grace, working to save others. It is the reaching of every person on earth with the claim and promise of God's message of love and salvation, so that this generation may have opportunity to be restored in His image, now and forever. Thus, the 'finishing of the work' means one thing: communicating God's message through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit to all the world's population so that God can proclaim His work finished. When this happens Jesus will come. 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come,' Matthew 24:14."

The document then listed 10 implementation steps, among which were "Clarify the role of the pastor" and "Limit building projects."

A Finished Work

More than 30 years have passed since the Annual Council voted that document, and it seems that we are no nearer to finishing the work than we were back then. Oh, yes, we do have quite a few more church members than we did then, but is that "finishing the work?"

The question of "What is an Adventist?" is particularly relevant to this plea of the Annual Council. It would seem that only Adventists have been given the task of converting the world for Christ and bringing in his coming. There is no mention in the document that God will use anyone else other than Adventists.

Then there is the question of Laodicea. The document gives one line to this subject. "Most members and ministers recognize that we are weakened by a Laodicean condition in the church."

There is no discussion amidst the 10 implementation plans about the three remedies that God gives in his plea to the Laodicean church of Revelation—none whatsoever. Could it be that we will be here a lot longer? So, what is an Adventist?

It would seem that only Adventists have been given the task of converting the world for Christ.

Treading on Holy Ground

I get very nervous when a talented individual who usually exhibits positive and progressive insights about issues confronting the contemporary Adventist Church expresses concern about colleagues and fellow believers who "question" Scripture, as in "Treading on Holy Ground" (Winter 2009).

Specifically, Andy Nash suggests that, in considering the Creation narratives in Genesis, the questioner "understands more about Adam and Eve than Jesus did … [and in positioning himself] as knowing more in A.D. 2008 than Jesus did in A.D. 28 is, in my view, [on]very dangerous territory—holy ground that's being treaded, sandals on, by people in positions of influence."

What precisely is the "holy ground" that is being stepped upon? It is a particular point of view, a stated opinion. It is an opinion about what Jesus knew about the world as a human. For almost the entire period of its existence, there has been a highly contentious debate carried on within corporate Christianity, usually with great fervor, about the nature of Jesus. Pious and, I suppose, not-so-pious Christians have been excommunicated—and worse—by other Christians based on differences of opinion about the precise nature of the principal founder of Christianity.

Was Jesus 50 percent human and 50 percent divine? Or was it 20 percent and 80 percent? Perhaps 80/20? My own personal favorite is encompassed in the following three faith statements: (1) Jesus was 100 percent human and 100 percent divine, (2) I do not have the slightest idea of what such percentages really mean and, (3) In the final analysis, I don't think anyone else knows what such percentages really mean.

As far as knowing more in A.D. 2008 (now A.D. 2009) than Jesus did in A.D. 28, I am approaching an understanding of this on the basis that Jesus was 100 percent human. If this is correct, Jesus in A.D. 28 knew nothing about antibiotics, space travel, or the nature of the geological column. He accepted and assumed the common understandings about the world of everyone else who lived in his time and place. Whether Adam and Eve were literal individuals, symbols, or metaphors is hardly worth spending much time worrying or arguing about.

ERVIN TAYLOR is the executive publisher of *Adventist Today*.

Andy Nash rightly laments the departure of certain contemporary Adventists from Biblical teachings regarding creation, homosexuality, etc. But his sympathetic references to the teachings of Desmond Ford fail to consider the direct cause-and-effect relationship between the evangelical gospel Ford advocates and the reduced respect for Scripture we see rampant among us.

Like the dispensationalist he learned to be at the feet of F.F. Bruce, Ford deliberately devalues the greater portion of Scripture in seeking to extract his justification-alone gospel from apparently friendly verses. At the Palmdale Conference in 1976, he stated unequivocally that only in Romans 3-5 can we find the basic nature of righteousness by faith, and that "if what we believe is not here, we need to think again" (*The Palmdale Documents*, p. 4).

In simple words, when salvation is reduced to forgiveness only, not only is practical holiness marginalized; so is any necessity of faithfulness to the truths of God's Word. "Doctrine is nice, obedience is nice, but Jesus is better," runs the mantra of so much of contemporary First World Adventism. The logic is nothing short of compelling. Why not open the church's doors to practicing homosexuals, evolutionists, or other deniers of Biblical authority when neither correct behavior nor correct doctrine is essential to salvation?

And with all due respect to Andy Nash, Daniel 8:14 is not a "difficult Biblical passage" once we permit the Bible to be its own interpreter, devoid of the premises of higher criticism and the unscriptural doctrine of a finished atonement on Calvary. For Desmond Ford to bemoan the decline of Biblical and moral rectitude in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to bemoan the direct consequences of his own understanding of the gospel.

KEVIN D. PAULSON
Berrien Springs, Michigan

I, too, am "deeply grieved to see, within the Adventist Church, an increasing boldness among thought leaders to publicly raise doubts about significant points of Scripture" but from a different perspective than yours. We have had a long history of placing Scripture on a somewhat shaky podium in comparison to some other denominations. Just a few examples follow that illustrate how we have done that.

1. By and large we have rejected the idea of Biblical inerrancy. This was done even before we adopted, in writing, another source of "continuing authority." We have also dropped the term "the only unerring rule of faith and practice" that existed in item No. 1 of "Fundamental Beliefs" (See *Church Manual* 1976).

2. Having a belief system that heavily emphasizes the inadequacy of Scripture for us to understand for ourselves and especially for salvation in the "end-time," which requires a new set of many, many restrictions and additions that the apostles did not emphasize.

3. Continued use of the word "remnant" in such a way that it is applied primarily to a people that adhere to our particular dogma, excluding other Christians, except if they join us.

4. Using the term "Spirit of Prophecy" used by John in the first century A.D. to primarily designate one cultic 19th century set of writings and/or their author. Obviously John is referring to the means God uses to communicate with people through the Holy Spirit and/or his people to speak (or testify) of him over the ages.

5. Making the simple "Good News" of salvation so complicated that no one else, except ourselves, understands it. Apparently God has seen fit to share with us a most significant and unique requirement to understand certain modern dates that only we, as "the remnant," have had revealed to us, but no other significant Christian group "gets it" or recognizes it.

CORINNE PESTES
Sierra Vista, Arizona

Really, I am just trying to see how these "liberals" fit the SDA pattern in any way, or the Scriptural one. Whatever happened to preaching the gospel? To "judging with right judgment"? Sola scriptura? All

Scripture is inspired of God? "I resolved to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified" [2 Cor. 2:2]? No diversity allowed for here, at least as far as the authority of God's Word and the gospel are concerned. Naturally, we all have our individual diversities, but I thought one thing we all agree on is this.

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths (2 Tim. 4:1-4, ESV).

LORRAINE CLARKE
Devonport
Tasmania, Australia

Adventism's Meltdown

Alex Bryan is dead on target in "The End of American Adventism" (Winter 2009), but it will take more than "hope" to redeem Adventism. I think Adventism will be radically reprogrammed only after a meltdown. After serving 34 years in the denomination, sitting on numerous conference committees, union committees, GC study committees, and pastoring everything from college to five church districts, I'm convinced there is both a financial AND a cultural crisis for Adventism.

The financial crisis was well stated by Bryan. Too much tithe disappears from the local church to fuel an obsolete, bloated administrative structure. Prior to being fired in 2003, I too wrote a document, *The Local Church: The Most Important Institution on Earth*, wherein I defanged the guilt factor administrators use to scare members into believing that the conference rather than the local church is the biblical "storehouse." I also suggested that the next union president should be given the following challenge: Your job priority is to return in five years to this session with the report that you have creatively eliminated the need for this union conference.

This change can only be effected by humble, honest administrators willing to vote themselves out of a job. Pastors who put their hand on that Holy Grail get axed. I had a GC officer tell me that all I needed to do was "recant" my tithe paper and I'd be "fine." A recently retired administrator told me he saw no interest among administrators toward embracing honesty that would jeopardize their job. Sad.

The second crisis is cultural and linked to the "remnant" mentality, which has created attitudes where obedience is prized over grace, having the "truth" more valued than fruit of the Spirit, where members think "we're remnant and they're apostates," and where worship celebration is often considered a subversive form of Pentecostalism. Thus Adventism's crisis is both in the administrative offices and in the pews.

DR. TERRY POOLER, PASTOR
SABBATH GRACE FELLOWSHIP
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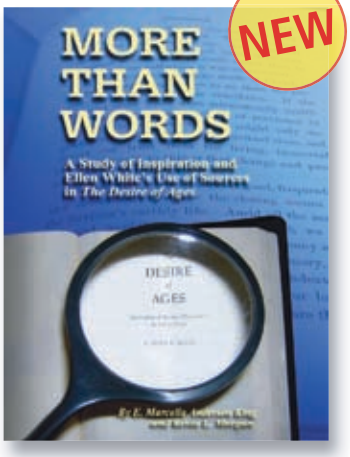

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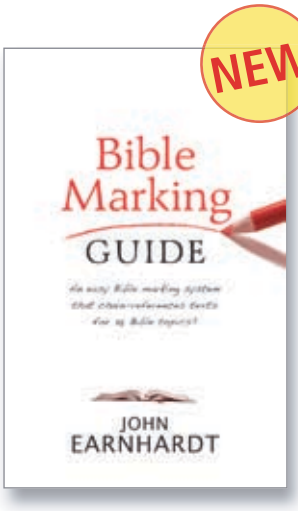

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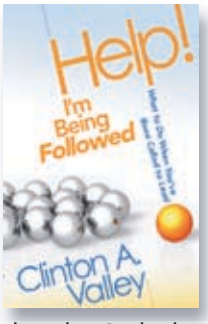

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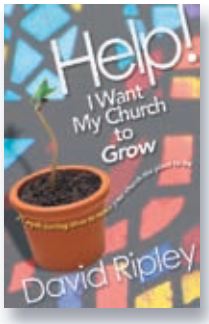

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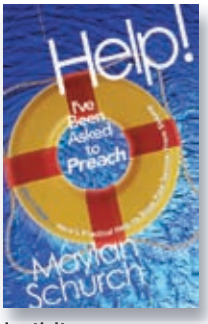

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What Is An Adventist?

FOUR VIEWS

Two STORIES *define* US

BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Ideally, two stories define us when we consider ourselves to be Adventist.

One is the story that began with William Miller and his compelling (though misguided) reading of Daniel and Revelation. That story continues now, Sabbath by Sabbath, when Seventh-day Adventists who have suspended ordinary busyness gather to consider the Bible and celebrate the wonder of divine grace. It continues, too, on the weekdays when these same people, rested and attuned to a different but still radical hope, attempt to live their lives in the light of Christ.

The other story is the one that must be the compass and inspiration for every Christian and every Christian people. It is the master story told in Scripture. Its defining moment is the resurrection of Jesus, the crucified man now "declared to be the Son of God" and now embraced as "Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4, NRSV). The story comes to its final crescendo when this same Jesus ushers in, at his second coming, a day of unshadowed beauty and perfect joy.

When you consider these two stories together, you end up with a vision of Adventism shaped to its core by grace and faithfulness. Not one of these, but both.

Let's consider each story and draw out the radical conclusions.

Reaching for Radical Hope

When in 1844 the followers of William Miller stopped everything to look into the skies for Jesus' Second Coming, they might as well have peered into the belly of the sea. The skies did not light up, and the Advent failed to materialize.

Some of these Adventists passed through the Great Disappointment without losing faith. And some, following the lead of sea captain and anti-slavery activist Joseph Bates, emerged as Sabbath keepers. In the making was a community that would embrace the hope of the Second Coming *while celebrating, every week, the goodness of creation, the value of human work, the story of ancient Israel*. These Adventists, James and Ellen White among them, would begin to distance themselves from prejudice against the heritage of Judaism. And the second coming would find, through the Sabbath, a link to earthly yearnings and earthly possibilities.

"These" few Adventists were at the same time beginning to interpret their lives in terms of God's call for a "remnant," a faithful minority who would commit themselves to keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The picture of the remnant was prominent in the Old Testament and enshrined anew in the visionary writings of John the Revelator. Part of

faithfulness, these pioneers came to believe, was honoring the Sabbath as God gave it. Part of it was allowing the whole life, teaching, and character of Christ to illuminate true faith.[2]

Organized Adventism began in 1861 when a group of Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Michigan banded together as a legal association. By now the still-fledgling movement had been shaping its vision for nearly 20 years. Delegates to this meeting had no interest, however, in a creed-like statement of belief. As James White said, a creed would block "new light" and stand in "direct opposition" to the "gifts" of the Holy Spirit. But the delegates did embrace a simple pledge: "We, the undersigned," they said, "hereby associate ourselves together as a church, taking the name, Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting together to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ."[3]

The pledge expressed the core convictions that united these early believers. They had been through harrowing disappointment, but they were still determined to honor God and follow Jesus. They began to pay more and more attention to the earth, praying, as Jesus had, that God's will be done here as in heaven.

They stood firm against slavery. They built hospitals and colleges—life-enhancing institutions to match the life-enhancing habits their health message was helping them embrace. They sent missionaries to other lands and soon afterward to former slaves in the American South. In time, they began to resist the culture of drinking that was taking an alarming toll on families, job performance, public safety, and even the integrity of politics. They fought hard to fend off Sunday laws and even imagined themselves, as Ellen would say to Battle Creek College students in the 1880s, sitting in "deliberative and legislative councils," helping to enact the nation's laws.[4]

The focus on faithfulness would engender, of course, both anxiety and self-satisfaction. You could easily lapse into alarm about not being good enough for God; you could also make Adventism's pledge of full loyalty to Christ a matter of conceit. Or you could fall into both of these snares and have a weirdly conflicted inner life, a mishmash of self-loathing and self-adulation.

In 1888, at a meeting in Minneapolis, church leaders heard a contentious debate that grew out of these unhappy possibilities. In the end they agreed that you don't, after all, earn God's approval, as religious "legalists" try to do. You simply benefit from God's grace—God's forgiveness and empowering presence. And at every step you remain profoundly thankful for the ability this gives you to live your life with confidence.

That message of 1888—the message of "righteousness by faith"—would all too often be resisted but never lose its relevance. It was underscored a decade later when Ellen White, herself invigorated by the 1888 meeting, shared her own grace-centered experience in *The Desire of Ages*, a moving and widely circulated account of Jesus' life and ministry.

When Ellen White died in 1915, Adventism became less daring. Evangelism flourished, spurred on by the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 and the call to saintly "endurance" in a time of pervasive homage to evil power. But over the several decades leading up to the 1960s, the search for new vision and deeper authenticity gave way to preoccupation with shoring up institutional strength and beliefs. Looking backward, Adventists could hardly see what was in front of them. For the most part, the church's leaders in Germany gave their support to Hitler. When the Civil Rights Movement in America brought this nation's injustice and pent-up anger to the foreground, the *Review and Herald* said Adventist efforts to influence public policy concerning race were "strictly out of bounds" and would waste the church's moral authority on matters irrelevant to "the gospel commission."

But the diversity that had come into the church with the mission to black America in the 1880s now paid dividends. The church's magazine, *Message,* for black evangelism gave careful support to cooperative Christian action on the matter of race relations, and the influential African-American evangelist E.E. Cleveland declared in 1969 that "passivism" concerning sociopolitical problems is an evil. Those, he said, who call for disengagement from social concerns are "purveyors of misery" and "are not the servants of God."[5]

Now the journey of *becoming* came into prominence again. Those uncomfortable with the journey would repeatedly contest it, but it never rolled to a halt. Through the rest of the 20th century, Adventists searching for deeper authenticity engaged one another on numerous issues, including, once again, the question of "righteousness by faith." Discussion ranged over subjects like Ellen White's prophetic leadership, the significance of Daniel and Revelation, and the place of women in a truly biblical community. The conversations were vigorous. Often they were contentious and disheartening. Sometimes they were energizing and gave rise to new, or better, institutions, as with the growth and advancement of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

In 1980, in the midst of all this, church leaders skittish about turmoil voted a lengthy statement of official Adventist belief. The statement harked back, in some ways, to the period after Ellen White, when the church's energy went into shoring up what had been achieved in the past. Still, the "preamble," though all too often honored in the breach, said that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit new understanding could be "expected."[6]

The 1980 document was not the final word. Even if only fitfully, the journey of *becoming*—of searching always for new vision and deeper authenticity—would go on.

The Master Story

Two stories define us, and the story *behind* the Adventist story is the one true compass for the journey that goes on. It is the Bible story, and it begins, as it must end, with grace and faithfulness.

Abraham was the father of the movement Jesus loved and wanted to advance. God offered him a blessing he had not earned and said that through his offspring this blessing would touch "all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3, NRSV). Inside a culture bereft of hope and consumed with dark thoughts, Abraham believed, thanks to the grace of God, that human possibilities could be transformed.

Later, after many family wanderings and an unexpected descent into Egyptian slavery, Abraham's children (now called the Children of Israel) again felt the imprint of divine generosity. Through Moses, God delivered them from slavery and renewed the pledge, or "covenant," that he had made with Abraham. God had borne them "on eagles' wings" out of Egypt. They would be their Maker's representatives on earth, knowing and sharing the blessings of intimacy with God. They would be, in other words, a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation," bringing God to others by being faithful themselves (Ex. 19:4, 6, NRSV).

The covenant agreement said that as God had come to Israel's aid, so, henceforth, would Israel come to the aid of others. Although the details would later need amendment, most famously by Jesus himself, the basic vision of fair play and special regard for the poor came clearly into view.[7]

Israel came to the Promised Land but again and again veered off the road God had in mind. The kings who emerged tilted

mostly into arrogance and made the poor and sorrowing feel worse than before. In the end, Israel split apart, falling repeatedly into turmoil and wrenching loss.

When crisis came, prophets arose, thundering words of rebuke, moral vision, and great hope. These prophets—Amos, Isaiah, Zechariah, and the like—expanded on the dream that Abraham had lived by. Jeremiah anticipated Jesus in calling men and women to generosity even in the midst of their enemies. He told those who became exiles in Babylon to "seek the welfare (or "peace," in Hebrew, *shalom*) of the city" you reside in (Jer. 29:1-9, NRSV).

Ezekiel portrayed Israel's hope as a "covenant of peace." The blessing God promised Abraham would take the shape of peace and would bring, as he said, food, freedom, and safety—prosperity and well-being; the conditions for human flourishing—to everyone.[8] That theme—of peace, or of the common welfare—would later epitomize the gospel vision.

In Isaiah's Servant Songs, the prophet saw a world united against Israel, a people resolutely generous, a suffering that would somehow be redemptive. This was, again, an anticipation of the Jesus story. And it was assurance that the covenant of peace would hold through all the ups and downs and that God's people would help bring ruin to repair.[9]

Centuries later, Jesus was born—at a point, once more, of deep humiliation. The streets were bristling with cold-hearted and often ferocious Roman soldiers. Ordinary folk—especially the neediest—were desperate for change. At about age 30, Jesus embarked on a public mission that would both announce and embody the prospect of change. A radical Jew, he said a new day, or new Kingdom, was dawning, and in that light he asked people to open their hearts and renew their minds. He shared maxims and stories you could never forget. He healed sick people and forgave the guilty. Like the prophets before him, he made outsiders into insiders, argued with the high and mighty, and set forth a vision of prosperity and well-being for all. When he spelled out his take on the future, his predictions were unsettling yet profoundly hopeful.

As for the disciples, Jesus described their life and mission in the longest of his recorded sermons. He began with the "Beatitudes," a series of blessings on those who follow him. He said, for example, that when disciples know their need, have compassionate hearts, and suffer persecution for doing what is right, they receive gifts that are fitting for them. Only once in the Beatitudes did he say what his followers would actually *do*—actually take up as a mission—and that was in the blessing he pronounced on "peacemakers." Jesus' followers would be peacemakers. They would also be evangelists for peacemaking, going forth to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 5:9; also 28:19, 20). In all of this, they would focus on creating the conditions for human flourishing. Peacemaking would mark their identity as "children of God."

Jesus was the embodiment of these words. Out of the God-intoxicated hope his Sabbaths helped to keep alive, he sought the well-being of all. When he faced resistance, he would not compromise the compassion in his heart. Even his enemies he loved. The cross was compelling evidence of his character, and even more compelling was the resurrection. By this sign, so Peter said, "God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36, NRSV).

So What Is an Adventist?

According to the Bible story, Jesus is the one true compass for the Christian life. He is therefore is our guide for becoming who we are, our guide on the always-urgent journey to deeper authenticity. As the pioneers knew well, the "faith of Jesus" *is* our standard and our goal.[10]

So now, in continuity if not lock step with the pioneers, and with the heightened sense of divine generosity the years have bequeathed, we may declare: *Thanks to the gift of grace, and for the purpose of blessing to all, we take up the peacemaking mission, and join together in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

All who say and live these words, or so my argument suggests, are Adventist.

Charles Scriven is president of Kettering College of Medical Arts in Kettering, Ohio.

[1]For this latter, see P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 192-194. Here the author quotes both James and Ellen White.
[2]The pledge is cited in *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, p. 310. One account of the meeting, including the discussion of creeds that preceded embrace of the pledge, is in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827-1862* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1985), pp. 453, 454.
[3]From White's *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 82, this remark is quoted by Jonathan M. Butler, "Adventism and the American Experience," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 195.
[4]A long quote from the *Review* editorial may be found in Charles W. Teel, Jr., ed., *Remnant & Republic: Adventist Themes for Personal and Social Ethics*, p. 21; for the black Adventist perspective, see Morgan, pp. 160-162.
[5]Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, in the second edition of their *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 105-108, argue that a second fundamentalism (following the first that, in their account, emerges after the death of Ellen White) took root in 1980s and 1990s Adventism. The preamble to the 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs remains a bulwark against sheer fundamentalism.
[6]See the so-called "book of the covenant" in chapters 19-24 of Exodus.
[7]This view of the promise—this vision of peace—is in Eze. 34:25-31.
[8]From the Servant Songs, see Isa. 42:3, 50:5, 6, and all of chapter 53, especially verse 12; see also Isa. 54:10—"my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord"—and Isa. 61:4.
[9]The phrase is from Rev. 14:12, at the climax of the Three Angel's Messages.

WHAT IS AN ADVENTIST?

The Last GENERATION *and* DANIEL 8:14

BY LARRY KIRKPATRICK

In 1970, theologian Jacques Ellul offered a dystopic, sad-eyed view of the future—not one he favored: "It will not be a universal concentration camp, for it will be guilty of no atrocity. It will not seem insane, for everything will be ordered, and the strains of human passion will be lost among the chromium gleam. We shall have nothing more to lose, and nothing to win. Our deepest instincts and our most secret passions will be analyzed, published, and exploited."

Thus he described the apparent triumph of a materialistic world. Not a world cleansed from sin, but one in which humanity is captured by itself; a humanity bereft of humanity.

God's plan is different. In a world spiraling downward in flames, he has called Seventh-day Adventists to be agents for healing. In the sands of Sinai, he illustrated a plan of intervention with his sanctuary. The sins of his people would be daily reconciled, annually removed from the camp. All of this pointed to Jesus in heaven blotting out their sins. Thus, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

Daniel 8:14 outlines divine intervention, salvation, and human participation in closure of the sin problem. Jesus is central.

Divine Intervention

The prophetic template was laid out by Jesus. When our first parents rebelled, he would not abandon us. The die was cast; he would fight for his children. All we like sheep have gone astray, and at his voluntary initiative, the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

The coming of Messiah was promised. The Seed of the woman would destroy Satan. Jesus' foot would be wounded, the serpent's

head crushed. Sin, in the end, would be eradicated root and branch.

As soon as there was sin, there was a Savior. Jesus would come. Some angels, even with knowledge of God's loving character, chose rebellion still. Intentionally, and with premeditation, these aligned themselves with Satan. What more could God do for those who, dwelling in his light, yet chose to curl inward upon themselves?

Humankind was in a different place. The rebellion of our ancestors was intentional, to be sure, yet not chosen with substantial premeditation. Humanity, less aware of God's kindness, might still learn. Rebel angels departed from God's light and leapt into the abyss; rebel man still dangled at its edge. Hope remained; for him, the divine character might still be clarified.

Among his methods for building trust, God chose predictive prophecy. A Seventh-day Adventist is one who considers what is foretold and what is fulfilled. He understands that from 457 B.C. a prophetic time period began to unfold and that the same ended in A.D. 1844. God's hand is active in history. Events unfold, century after century, down to our time. God intervenes.

Salvation

Jesus is central to salvation. Daniel 8:14, a time prophecy, spoke of the sanctuary. God commissioned the Hebrew tabernacle as a means of illustrating Israel's need for reconciliation. It is all about sin removal.

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6, ESV). Jesus did not give his life for ours because of any goodness in us; humankind had pulled its own plug. In the infinite darkness that resulted from shutting out the infinite God, only Deity could take the initiative. Were we to be saved, Jesus must restore the connection. Hope is found in his mercy, never in our own merit. We have none! His salvation—free to us but costly to him—he would make available. All who are willing may partake.

The sanctuary is centered on the twin motifs of sacrifice and cleansing—just as is salvation. If we take away one motif and disregard the other, redemption is distorted.

A Seventh-day Adventist sees the depths of his own sin, looks over the abyss of doom, and turns to the light of goodness and God. He comes bloody-knuckled and bare-handed to the cross. There, he looks up and lives. Nothing is ever the same again.

God's goodness overflows; he is not satisfied but to forgive. If we are injured by sin, then now is the time to be healed by Jesus (Isa. 53:5). God wants us to experience his victory; he wants us to know the power of his resurrection today (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 6:11-15). Why wait?

Human Participation in Closure of the Sin Problem

The sanctuary would "be cleansed." Jesus invites our participation in his divine plan for ending the sin problem. Beliefs shape actions. Those who attacked the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, did not act at random; they manifested their beliefs. They touched thousands of lives with death. The Seventh-day Adventist, God intends, shall manifest his beliefs and touch thousands for life.

Religious understandings result from interlinked ideas that are not always apparent. The theology of certain reformers was colored by their previous study of law. Legal constructs are less demanding than a relationship to an actual person. Ironically, some emphasized grace versus law when they should have highlighted grace versus sin. Centuries later, some Christians' focus still falls more readily upon the cross than its bleeding victim.

The Seventh-day Adventist sees God's law as a thumbnail sketch of his character. As such, the Ten Commandments are inevitably positive. God's law in stone cannot save; it reveals sin without giving life. It is an indispensable tool, a looking glass. But Jesus is no mere thumbnail sketch; he is God. "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17, ESV). Seeing God the person, we see a ministry of life.

The idea comes repeatedly in Scripture: while humans are indeed on trial, so is God. We find explicit statements like Romans 3:4, affirming that God will prevail when he is judged. Job's life says the same (Job chapters 1, 2). Inevitably God will be evaluated by the judgments he makes (Psa. 9:16; Prov. 20:11; Matt. 12:33; Luke 6:44; Eph. 3:10). His goodness leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). His actions must be such that we evaluate them as "good." As it is true for us, "With the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you" (Matt. 7:2, ESV), so it is true of God. He did not start the world running and then indifferently drop us into a live minefield. He would, with the dangers of free will, nurture humanity all the way to glory.

A Seventh-day Adventist sees the depths of his own sin, looks over the abyss of doom, and turns to the light of goodness and God. He comes bloody-knuckled and bare-handed to the cross.

The Seventh-day Adventist says, Yes, he nurtures us all the way home. While God does nothing in partnership with Satan, how artfully he makes the occasion of evil an opportunity to accomplish better purposes. "For those who love God all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28, ESV). From his creation of free beings there flows forth positive fruit; we are to taste—and make tastable—the fruit (Psa. 34:8; Matt. 7:15-20).

The Righteous Deeds of the Saints

How is God's plan of practical help to us 6,000 years downstream from the Fall? Heaven has raised up a people to address the fire and not just the sparks. Many Christians consider the sin and salvation question in binary terms: God and man in relation one to another. Seventh-day Adventists see this, but also that the

atonement impacts angels, and doubtless, unfallen beings on other worlds. All moral intelligences in the creation are in the viewing audience—invited to weigh whether or not the morality of their Creator matches his rhetoric.

So, a contest: Satan influences people to live his way, while Yahweh works with those willing to become unselfish. Satan proposes that no one can keep God's commandments; God at last points to a people and says, "Here are they that keep the commandments" (Rev. 14:12). The battle is on. God gives his adversary the rope, and in the end, Satan hangs himself with it. Haman is the illustration (Esth. 7:9, 10).

A Seventh-day Adventist is someone who—if he could push a button and put an end to tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain—would do so immediately. He is the ultimate abolitionist.

Keeping the commandments is not what we sometimes think. When people have narrowed what it means to be a Jesus-follower, God expands it again. When reduced to insincere worship, he cuts to the heart (Isaiah 58). When narrowed to Phariseeism, Christ deepens the application (Matthew chapters 5-8, 23). Where we might slip back into mere dogma, James presses us to apply our beliefs in practical life (James chapters 2-5).

John nails it in Revelation 19:7, 8. The clothing of his end-time people is described as "righteous deeds" (RSV). The church makes herself ready (19:7), but her attire is a gift (19:8). Those who pass in the judgment are identified by Jesus, not as those with "right" doctrine and an absence of negative deeds, but as manifesting positive righteousness (Matt. 25:31-46).

Here is a church unique in the world; yes, witnessing to its faith, yes, giving Bible studies, but more. The wholeness we embrace leads us to work for health enhancement, to make contributions in science, to minister to the weakest of the weak, and to lift whomever we can toward true humanity here and hereafter.

Proverbs 8:36 speaks of wisdom, but it is also true of Jesus that "Whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death" (NIV). Adventists are set in this world to help others onto the pathway of life and to stop them from injuring themselves. As John the Baptist, we are to point them to the Physician. But doctors do not labor alone; healing is a community project. God has a church.

Christians have long seen in Genesis 3:15 a prediction that the coming Messiah would crush Satan under his heel. And yet, Romans 16:20 reminds us that Jesus' victory is not complete at the cross. Decades after Calvary, Paul writes, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (ESV). His allusion to Genesis 3:15 is as unmistakable as his meaning: There remains a work for the last generation. We cooperate with heaven in its accomplishment.

"Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165). Is this true? Seventh-day Adventists are appointed to demonstrate that it is. They are placed at center stage to show what it means to follow Jesus wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4)—and where he goes is a life without sinning. Still, it is not the absence of sin by which this demonstration will be settled; rather, it is the presence of Christ's righteousness that brings resolution (Rev. 7:13, 14; 19:7, 8).

A Seventh-day Adventist is someone who—if he could push a button and put an end to tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain—would do so immediately. He is the ultimate abolitionist. He traces the long effects of sin backward. In Satan, he finds the origin; in himself, their incubation; in Jesus, their solution (Rev. 21:1-8). To paraphrase the 19th century's W. L. Garrison, a Seventh-day Adventist needs to be all on fire, for he has mountains of ice all about him to melt.

When we read, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," we see that God has a purpose. The camp will be clean. Hearts of rebels will be made new. It is the gospel versus the chromium gleam. God and Satan are grappling face to face. Between them, the remnant looks up in the vortex. Although works wrought through them have a part in God's vindication, their personal salvation is found in Christ alone. Jesus is the only hope of glory.

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WHAT IS AN ADVENTIST?

BEYOND *Culture*

BY SARI FORDHAM

As a child in Uganda, I would sit on the stoop and watch the sky. I wasn't looking for faces or for animal shapes; I was looking instead for a cloud that was the size of a man's hand. When I found one, I would wait, peering up. Would it be *the* cloud? Would it draw nearer and nearer until finally I could see the wings of angels? Would Jesus come today?

I'm a third-generation Adventist. I'm also a cultural Adventist. While faith and culture are separate entities, they sometimes feel so intertwined that it's difficult to separate one from the other. To grow up in the church is to be seeped in both. Like many Adventists' parents, mine bought the 10-volume series of Arthur Maxwell's *The Bible Story* and read from them at night. On Sabbath afternoons, my sister and I played charades giving body to familiar plots—the stories of Josiah, Esther, and Jezebel. Our reading was supplemented by Eric B. Hare, Sam Campbell, Harry Baerg, and C.S. Lewis. I loved these books. Who wouldn't want to read about two porcupines named Salt and Pepper? After stories, we would pray for the missionaries and colporteurs. I was never quite certain what a colporteur was, but the mission life was one I knew well.

Much of my education came from Adventist schools: Home Study International, Burton Adventist Academy, Atlanta Adventist Academy, and Southern Adventist University. I was a student missionary, twice, and helped with Vacation Bible Schools. I made haystacks—the kind one eats, of course—while working at an Adventist summer camp, and I knew several ways to fix FriChik. While I had long ago traded in Postum—a gateway beverage—for the real thing, I was sorry when I heard that Kellogg's stopped making it.

The Adventist culture is rich, and to grow up Adventist is a very specific experience—one for which I am ultimately thankful.[1] But the act of being an Adventist should extend beyond culture. It must be more substantive and radical than culture, or diet, or even having a certain set of doctrines. The term Seventh-day Adventist is a descriptive one. It means a group of people who worship on Saturday and wait for the second coming of Christ. These beliefs set us apart from most other Protestants. But this is a starting point, not an end point.

These beliefs set us apart from other Protestants. But this is a starting point, not an end point.

When I think of the Adventist church as it is embodied in the United States, I think of the Bible's rich young ruler. It's a familiar story, appearing in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Each

time this encounter is prefaced by a more heartwarming, more theologically comfortable event: Jesus and the children. Yet even here, Jesus' values do not conform to expectations. When mothers start laying babies in Jesus' lap, the disciples protest. But Jesus says: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matt. 19:14, NIV).

Perhaps I am reading too much of myself in the story, which is a dangerous thing; perhaps I am reading in too much of my church, but I see the young man as a cultural believer. I see someone who spent his life taking great care to tread inside the rules, adhering to a strict lifestyle.

Enter the rich young ruler. He is the symbolic opposite of the children, with their snotty noses and their loud shouting. He is respectable, educated, affluent, and yet, like many Adventists today, he wonders if he will be saved. "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" (verse 16, NIV).

Jesus tells the man he must obey the commandments, and when the man asks which ones, Jesus replies: "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself'" (verses 18, 19, NIV).

It is a long list of rules, and many of them are difficult and abstract, but the rich young man does not hesitate in his answer. He does not appear conflicted about what it means to love your neighbor as yourself or what it means to tell all shades of the truth. "All these, I have kept," he says. "What do I still lack?" (verse 20, NIV). Such audacity, and yet, here he is. Something brought him to Jesus. He is what we, in a creative writing classroom, would call a complex character. He is a confident man, a decisive man—and yet, he is gnawed by apprehension. *What must I do to be saved?* The one point he seems certain of is his own goodness. He is a product of an exact religious upbringing, a tradition he might have seen others fall away from. He has been diligent about being *good*.

Perhaps I am reading too much of myself in the story, which is a dangerous thing; perhaps I am reading in too much of my church, but I see the young man as a cultural believer. I see someone who spent his life taking great care to tread inside the rules, adhering to a strict lifestyle. I see someone who is sincere but whose religion is reflexive, rather than intentional. He does not wrestle enough with the hard implications of faith, nor his responsibility to others. When it comes to loving his neighbor as himself, he is not the Good Samaritan.

Jesus is not as easy on the rich young man as he has been on other seekers—the woman at the well, for instance, or Zacchaeus the tax collector. Jesus tells the young man, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (verse 21, NIV).

The man cannot do it, for he has great wealth. It is not until here, near the end of the account, that we are told about the man's money. We also learn something else. The young man is respectful. He could have argued aggressively with Jesus, or he could have bargained: *What if I give away 50 percent? What if I follow you once a week?* The story is a tragedy, with an ending that leaves the reader unbalanced. Filled with sorrow, the man slips out of the crowd.

Seizing the moment, Jesus reflects on what has just happened: "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (verses 23, 24, NIV).

We can dissect the story to make it easier to swallow—placing emphasis on the word *want* ("if you *want* to be perfect") and pointing out that the only perfection available to us is through Christ. We can draw comfort from the end of the account, when Jesus tells his shocked disciples, "With God all things are possible" (verse 26, NIV). These are important observations, but we must not ignore the emphasis on giving to the poor, on discarding materialism, on following Jesus without the encumbrance of worldly goods.

Two years ago, I read a book that was so inspiring that I couldn't stop talking about it. *Mountains Beyond Mountains* introduces readers to someone who is in every way the opposite of the rich young ruler. Paul Farmer is a Harvard-educated doctor who believes that health care is a human right. While attending medical school, he set up a free clinic in Haiti. In 1987, he helped found Partners in Health, a charitable organization,

which has revolutionized how drug-resistant tuberculosis is treated in poor countries. He is widely respected in his field, even winning the prestigious "genius award" from the MacArthur Foundation in 1993. But here is what makes Paul special. He gave the $200,000 grant, *all of it*, to Partners in Health.

At the time the book was written, Paul Farmer earned $125,000 a year from Harvard and Brigham—two jobs he kept in the States, while flying back and forth to his clinic in Haiti. Each month he gave his check to the Partners in Health bookkeeper. She would pay his bills, pay his mother's house mortgage, and put the rest into the charity. "Honey," she once told him, "you are the hardest workin' broke man I know."[2]

What motivated him? In one of his many conversations with author Tracy Kidder, Farmer said this: "If I took steps to be a doctor for those who don't have medical care, it could be regarded as a sacrifice, but it could also be regarded as a way to deal with ambivalence. I feel ambivalent about selling my services in a world where some can't buy them. I feel ambivalent about that, because you *should* feel ambivalent."[3]

I had the great privilege of meeting Tracy Kidder and talking with him about the craft of writing. Though he had won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for previous projects, *Mountains Beyond Mountains* was the book that seemed to set him on fire. At the end of our appointment, I brought up social justice. It was going to be an aside as I headed out the door. Instead, we talked quickly and easily about Uganda and Haiti. Later I would have to run to make it to class on time. Unfortunately, I didn't take notes. But Mark Klempner does a wonderful interview with Tracy Kidder for *The Huffington Post*.

Klempner comments: "As a religious person, I would have to say that what [Paul Farmer's] doing is holy work."

Kidder replies: "He's living a life that is pretty free of hypocrisy. Religions command us to do these things, but we don't. And he does. He showed me more reasons for despair than I had ever seen before, or had ever imagined. And yet, being around him, and the whole crew, was exhilarating. Because I got to see with my own eyes what this small group of people were able to do."[4]

Paul Farmer is not a Seventh-day Adventist, and while I know Adventists who are exemplars of service and social justice, I chose to focus on Paul Farmer because what he has done is extraordinary, but I also wanted to tease apart the strands of culture and active faith. Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" At the end of the story, Christ asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (Luke 10:36, NIV).

When I think of the question "*What does it mean to be a people of the Bible?*" I think instinctively of Paul Farmer and the way he sees poverty and injustice and acts with great intelligence, great compassion. He is someone who embodies the ideals of the gospel. And while he is not a flawless individual, he lives his beliefs without compromise.

Adventism began when a group of New Englanders began preaching Christ's imminent return. We are still waiting. God's time, after all, is not our time. But as we wait, let us not sit idly on the stoop, gazing at the sky. Let us not ignore the more earthly challenges around us: the devastation of malaria and HIV, the grinding poverty in which much of the world lives, and a war in Congo that has killed nearly 5 million people as of this writing.[5]

Jesus did not mean for us to be an interesting people with a rich culture. Rather, he left us with these powerful words: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. … I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:35, 36, 40, NIV).

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[1] I say *ultimately* because I want to acknowledge that growing up Adventist also comes with drawbacks; the obvious one is that an emphasis on rules can alienate church members—especially young members—and distract us from a message of love.
[2] Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 23.
[3] Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 24.
[4] Mark Klempner, "A Conversation with Tracy Kidder About Mountains Beyond Mountains," *The Huffington Post,* 16 Mar. 2008. http://www.huffington-post.com/mark-klempner/a-conversation-with-tracy_b_91799.html
[5] While the Adventist Church is affiliated with ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), a world-class non-governmental organization that does marvelous work around the world, our vague connection does not replace our personal commission to feed the hungry and give water to the thirsty. Only 8 percent of ADRA's budget comes from cash donations, and 4 percent comes from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (See ADRA's 2007 report.) We can do much more. For those who are interested in a sustainable, community-centered response to poverty, donating to ADRA is a good start. But ultimately, we must be involved.

WHAT IS AN ADVENTIST?

Giving the GOSPEL *Priority*

BY LARRY CHRISTOFFEL

Proclamation of "the gospel" is so integrally linked to Christ's advent that any true Adventist is one heralding the true Bible gospel (see Matt. 24:13, 14, 30, 31; Rev. 14:6, 7, 14ff). Opposition to the proclamation of the gospel precipitates the final crisis, God's intervention to which is Christ's return! I believe that an "Evangelical Adventist"[1] perspective, calling for the church's recovery of the Biblical gospel, could move the church toward a speedy completion of its God-ordained mission.

The Issue of Authority

A true Adventist identifies with and endorses the formal principle of the Protestant Reformation: *sola Scriptura*, "Scripture alone," meaning that the Bible is its own interpreter. Scripture should be understood using a grammatical, contextual, historical approach, examining the text in the original languages if possible. We must also distinguish between the meaning of a text and what later inspired authors write about it, being careful not to read the later writer's ideas back into the meaning of the earlier text.

Analogy of Scripture can be used as long as the passages you are comparing are being used in the same sense. The significance of Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments (although Paul is speaking of the inspired writings available at the time he was writing), is that it is "able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It is also "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man [and woman] of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:15-17, NASB). A true Adventist does not treat the writings of Ellen G. White as an infallible interpreter of Scripture, but regards her as one of God's inspired messengers having the gift of prophecy and as a visionary co-founder and leader of our denomination.

The Issue of Salvation

A true Adventist accepts the material principle of the Protestant Reformation: *sola fidi*, or by faith alone. A fuller explanation for me would go like this: God declares a person "just" or "righteous" (both from the same Greek word) by grace, through faith in the vicarious, substitutionary, atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is a *forensic* view of the gospel and of salvation, i.e., relating to a judge's decision in court. The Protestant Reformers were in agreement that one's standing in the judgment rests on one's being *imputed* righteous, not being made righteous first. The Roman Catholics and Protestants both agreed that good works were *necessary* for salvation. Protestants saw them as the *necessary fruit* following justification. Roman Catholics, however, included what God does in the person as part of the basis of their justification.

Paul states that in the gospel the "righteousness of God" is revealed (Rom. 1:16, 17) and explains the latter in Rom. 3:21-31, NASB. This "righteousness of God" is revealed "apart from the

Law," though the Law and the Prophets witness to it (verse 21). It is "through faith in Jesus Christ" available to everyone who believes (verse 22). Its need is revealed—"for all have sinned and [continue to] fall short of the glory of God" (verse 23). It involves one's "being justified as a gift by His grace" (verse 24). "Gift" and "by His grace" are a lavish redundancy indicating the extreme graciousness of God. The verb "justify" is always used in a forensic sense of "declaring righteous," never "making righteous" (see remarks on Romans chapter 4).

"Righteousness/justification by faith" is God's declaration that for Christ's sake believing sinners are counted as righteous/just. This "justification" comes "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (verse 24). "Redemption" means claiming something through payment. The "redemption" is "in Christ Jesus," which he is about to explain in the next passage. The ground of redemption is disclosed in reference to Christ, "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (verse 25).

"Propitiation" could be translated "mercy seat," and it carries the connotation of appeasing or averting wrath. It reflects the bloody Day of Atonement sacrifice by which Israel was cleansed yearly. The demonstration of God's righteousness involves that "in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (verses 25, 26). We recall the death angel's "passing over" homes with blood on the doorposts on the night of Israel's redemption. The passing over of God "over the sins previously committed" is not referring to the sins we previously have committed before accepting Jesus, though God does that. It is not enough for him to pass over our sins of the past; we need him to cover our continuing to fall short of God's glory as well! The "sins previously committed" are the sins of humanity that should have been dealt with from Adam on. God had dealt with sin at the time of the Flood and at other times previously, but he had not dealt with them comprehensively and finally. At the cross of Calvary, God placed the sin of the world on Jesus, the Innocent One. He experienced the total separation from God and from life itself, which sin demands, experiencing the fate of the wicked in the executive judgment. He took what we deserve and gave us what Jesus deserved. Paul encapsulated the gospel explanation in these words: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law" (verse 28).

Romans 4 points out that righteousness by faith, or justification, is *imputed* to believers, the main verb *logidzomai* meaning reckoned or counted. In this chapter, Paul cites two key Old Testament passages, Gen. 15:6 and Psa. 32:1, both of which contain the idea of imputation. The apostle excludes good works (Rom. 4:2-6), the law (verses 13-16), and ceremonies (verses 9-12) from the article of justification. Amazingly, God is described as "Him who justifies the ungodly" (verse 5, NASB) and as the One who "calls into being that which does not exist" (verse 17, NASB). We are "reckoned" righteous because God "handed over" Christ because of our sins, and because of our justification (i.e., the effectiveness of Calvary), God raised Jesus from the dead (verse 25, NRSV). Romans 1-4 explain the gospel, and chapters 5-8 draw out its implications for the Christian life.

He experienced the total separation from God and from life itself, which sin demands, experiencing the fate of the wicked in the executive judgment. He took what we deserve and gave us what Jesus deserved.

Romans 5 presents Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, as our *representative* in the heavenly court who, on the basis of his finished work, takes care of us in the present and the future judgment. Note the contrasts between the past and the present in verses 9-11. When it says "we shall be saved by His life" (verse 10, NASB), we should understand that Jesus himself is our righteousness in God's sight. The sinless character he perfected is embodied in his person. Before God, Jesus presents the benefits of his finished atonement, now and in the coming day of judgment. "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 1, NASB). Paul deduces the doctrine of original sin (verses 12-21) from the radical provisions of God's grace described before. He contrasts the two Adams: in Adam we have sin, condemnation, and death, but in Christ Jesus we have obedience, justification, and life. Note especially verse 19, NASB: "through the obedience of the One the many will be made [or constituted] righteous." God imputes Jesus' perfect life

of obedience and the righteousness based on his death to us, and we are reckoned righteous in the sense of being regarded to have kept the law perfectly—Jesus having died in our place for our sins. We need Jesus' perfect life imputed to us to cover our imperfect life of growing sanctification.

Romans chapter 6 is Paul's rejection of license, or antinomianism, and Romans 7 of legalism and perfectionism. Chapter 8 explains how the Spirit assists believers in their continual struggle with the flesh until the redemption of our bodies (verses 22-25). In this article I will not develop the rest of the theological section, Romans 9-11, where Paul discusses the national rejection of Christ by the Jews. There are surely lessons there for any religious organization that rejects or obfuscates the gospel. Romans 12-16 could be considered the "practical" section, following the theological section. In it Paul exhorts individuals to use their gifts, to practice love, to honor secular powers, to permit diversity in nonessential, and to promote the Gentile mission. Chapter 16 has implications for women in ministry, since many of the leaders and co-workers of Paul who are mentioned are women.

One of the greatest needs of our church is to come to a consensus on what the gospel is and how it impacts the other doctrines and practices. We need to make the cross central, as Paul did.

One of the greatest needs of our church is to come to a consensus on what the gospel is and how it impacts the other doctrines and practices. We need to make the cross central, as Paul did (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14). We need to state clearly that Jesus' life was more than a good example and that it is part of what God reckons to us (2 Cor. 5:21). We need to be clear that the anti-typical Day of Atonement commenced with Christ's preparation as High Priest at his birth, and that the atoning sacrifice, the high point on the Day of Atonement, is not eclipsed by our views on 1844. We need to present a *forensic* gospel, which puts things in a Biblical perspective. The gospel (justification) root and the works (sanctification) fruit must always be distinguished though never separated. Failure to do so could push Rev. 14:12 (KJV), "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," toward either license or legalism, obfuscating the "everlasting gospel."

Does not our church's claiming that its message and mission is the preparation of the world for Christ's return, through the proclamation of the three angels' messages of Rev. 14:6-12, demand that we come into consensus on the meaning of what John calls "an everlasting gospel" (KJV), lest we fall under Paul's double curse (Gal. 1:8, 9)?

The meaning of the "gospel" we adopt must be based solidly on the authority of Scripture alone and not by Ellen White's interpretation of Scripture. Seventh-day Adventism should accept the consensus of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation that the gospel is the *forensic* declaration that believers are justified on account of Jesus Christ's obedience unto death. This truth will impact everything else we teach. The gospel liberates the conscience and motivates for service and witness, all out of gratitude for what God in Jesus Christ has done for us. How long will we have to wait for this kind of *true* Adventism? This kind of Adventism welcomes sanctification on a personal and corporate level, but not on a meritorious level. Why not make Paul's vow our own: "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2, NASB).

Recently, on CNN News, a reporter reflecting on the recent election of a black president observed: "Lincoln knew what we were. He just didn't know what we might become."

Applied to the Adventist Church, this could translate: "The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church knew who we were (heralds of Christ's coming and the seventh-day Sabbath) but didn't know what we might become (heralds of an everlasting gospel, which alone prepares individuals to face the final judgment with confidence and hope).

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[1]For a discussion on "Evangelical Adventism," see Kenneth R. Samples, "From Controversy to Crisis, an Updated Assessment of Seventh-day Adventism," *Christian Research Journal,* Summer 1988, pp. 9-14; Kenneth R. Samples, "The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventists," *Christianity Today*, Feb. 5, 1990, pp. 18-21; Larry Christoffel, "'I, if I be lifted up'—a response," *Ministry*, December 1992, pp. 12, 13 [This article was responding to two articles written by J. David Newman, editor of *Ministry:* "Global Mission, My Mission," *Ministry*, April 1992, and "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," *Ministry*, October 1992. Newman in an open letter to the General Conference president called for him to facilitate making the gospel central to the Fundamental Beliefs statement and to show how other articles of faith relate to the gospel.]; Michelle Rader, David VanDenburgh, and Larry Christoffel, "Evangelical Adventism: Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross," *Adventist Today*, January/February 1994; "What Evangelicals Say About Seventh-day Adventists," *Adventist Today*, September/October 1996; Larry Christoffel, "The Prophetic Task of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Next Millennium," *Adventist Today*, November/December 1999, pp. 16, 17; Larry Christoffel, "Evangelical Adventism—*Questions on Doctrine's* Legacy," a paper prepared for the 50th Anniversary of the Publication of *Questions on Doctrine* Conference held at Andrews University in October 2007, available online at qod.andrews.edu.

LARRY CHRISTOFFEL'S Response to Sari Fordham

I agree with Sari Fordham that it is not enough to be a cultural Adventist—one who keeps the seventh-day Sabbath and looks forward to Christ's second coming. The story of the rich young ruler is a great illustration of many American Adventists who go through the motions but are looking for something they are missing. Christians should not be bound to materialism and should— like Paul Farmer, the non-Adventist physician—attempt to meet genuine needs of others. Nations and individuals whom Jesus invites to inherit his kingdom at his coming have the criteria of Matt. 25:35, 40.

I disagree that developing an ethic "beyond cultural Adventism" captures the essence of true Adventism, though I agree with nearly everything in her article. The question the rich young ruler raised, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16, NASB), points to the central issue facing Adventists and the world. Jesus' reply was, "…if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (verse 17), including five of the Ten Commandments. The young man was urged to abandon his materialism and follow Jesus. Abandoning materialism *alone* would not have secured eternal life for the young man, but rather following Jesus. Accepting Jesus would have meant, as only the unfolding story of the gospel would reveal, accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord. Salvation is by obedience, though none but Christ has achieved that. Nevertheless, as the Apostle Paul later explained, "…we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10, NASB) and "through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (verse 19, NASB). Having a clear perception of who Christ was and what he accomplished for us would have been the mainspring for the unselfish life Jesus called for.

The same sermon—the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24 and 25 that contained the description of those saved and lost, referred to in Sari Fordham's article—provides evidence for what the central issue is. Matthew 25:35 and 40, the verses Sari Fordham cited, make it unmistakably clear that the issue is what individuals did with or to Jesus, who came to them in the person of those in need. It is one's decision concerning Jesus that is decisive. According to Matt. 24:12-14, NASB, Jesus revealed that as the end would approach, lawlessness would increase and the love of most would grow cold. Those enduring to the end would be saved. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (verse 14). As the gospel would go forth, an unprecedented tribulation would arise (verses 21, 22), cut short by Christ's second coming for the sake of the elect (verses 30, 31).

Our greatest need as Seventh-day Adventist Christians is to have a clear statement of what the gospel is and how it relates to the other important truths we teach, including the kind of rich spiritual experience for which Sari Fordham's article calls.

LARRY CHRISTOFFEL'S Response to Larry Kirkpatrick

I agree with Larry Kirkpatrick that: (1) the ancient sanctuary services pointed to salvation and cleansing, neither of which can be ignored without distorting redemption; (2) personal salvation is found in Christ alone, based on God's mercy and not in our personal merit; (3) final-generation Christians do not habitually sin; (4) saints living through the final crisis are described as commandment-keepers; and (5) the non-meritorious good works of believers glorify God.

I disagree that the "last generation," with "commandment keeping" characterizing true believers, begins in A.D. 1844. New Testament believers saw their generation as the last (Matt. 24:34; Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20). Paul argued in Romans 6 that Christians do not continue in sin and presented a Christian ethic based on reckoning ourselves like God reckons us (verse 11-23). "Commandment keeping" was the norm for late first-century Christians (1 John 2:3, 4; 3:6, 7, 9), though no believer was to claim sinlessness (1 John

WHAT *is an* ADVENTIST?
RESPONSES

2:8-10). In the Day of Atonement service, the high priest cleansed in order: the most holy place, the holy place, and the burnt offering altar, where blood from the regular morning and evening sacrifices and the sin offerings had been applied (Lev. 16:17-19). If Jesus' returning to earth represents the leaving of the heavenly sanctuary, then forgiveness of sin extends up to that very point (Heb. 9:27, 28). Thus, forgiveness

The founders spent themselves carving out their new faith, finding God's path, and rejecting error because they saw that it had been destructive to their experience. Descendant generations, on the other hand, come upon the scene after that epic journey.

is offered along with help during Christ's intercessory work from his ascension to his coming (Heb. 4:14-16), with the sins being blotted out just before he returns (Heb. 9:27, 28). The mark of the beast crisis, which brings out the "remnant" and the "saints" (Rev. 12:17, KVJ; 14:12) is a *future* scenario, where gospel witnesses are forced to reveal their faith by either worshiping the image to the beast or the Creator. The issue is not whether they are living sinlessly, but whether they on a worldwide scale will worship only the true God or not; Daniel 3 and 6 present a similar dilemma faced by Old Testament believers.

The idea that the covering of true believers is described as the "righteous deeds of the saints" (Rev. 19:7, 8; 7:13, 14) is not a picture of "commandment keeping" or "not sinning" but is the portrait of those who appear as righteous in God's sight on account of their being blood-washed and blood-redeemed (Rev. 1:5, 6; 5:9, 10; 7:14; 12:11; 14:3; 22:14). We see a similar picture in Zech. 3:1-5; Isa. 61:10; 64:6; and Eph. 5:25-27. We should remember that the righteousness of God, containing the gospel, is through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus excluding the works of the law (Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21-28). In that day, believers will be "saved from the wrath *of God* through Him," "saved by His life," and will be constituted righteous "through the obedience of the One" (Rom. 5:9-11; 19, NASB). We are saved through the merits of the only Sinless One. Understood properly, the "faith of Jesus" becomes the mainspring of assurance, even for potential martyrs, as well as of fidelity to God's commandments.

LARRY CHRISTOFFEL'S Response to Charles Scriven

I agree with Charles Scriven's portrait of Adventists as those who affirm: "Thanks to the gift of grace, and for the purpose of blessing to all, we take up the peacemaking mission, and join together in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Our identity derives from the confluence of our denomination and the Bible stories, resulting in "a vision of Adventism shaped to its core by grace and faithfulness." Seventh-day Adventists have been social activists—standing against slavery, alcohol, and Sunday enforcement and recently for civil rights—and have engaged in building missionary, medical, education, and health institutions and the first-class ADRA humanitarian agency. From Abraham's time to Christ's, the Bible story has revealed a peacemaking theme, with God intending to bless the nations through his covenant people. I applaud the idea of Adventism's no-creed-but-Scripture commitment in its journey of becoming.

I disagree with Scriven that the "peacemaking" of social activism is at the heart of Adventism. Social activism, as with individual Christian ethics, is the *result* or *byproduct* of something more fundamental that must stand at the center and core of the Adventist identity. The "peace" that Jesus offered, through faith in him, is the reconciliation of individuals to God through the forgiveness of their sins and their being justified in God's sight. Coming to Jesus brings rest to the soul and postures individuals to do personal and corporate exploits for the kingdom. Jesus knew that the kingdom he inaugurated would offer reconciliation with God but would challenge existing political and religious structures. Jesus' beatitudes commended "peacemakers" and also those who were insulted, persecuted, and maligned, all "because of Me" (Matt. 5:9-12, NASB; see also Matt. 10:16-23). Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34, NASB) and proceeds to describe the opposition gospel witnesses would face. The context of the defining text of Seventh-day Adventism, Rev. 14:12, is in the context of "an everlasting gospel" going to the entire world just before Christ's return. This is but an expansion of the Olivet Discourse of Matt. 24:12-14, 21, 22, 30, 31. The description of true believers facing the final judgment in the last part of this sermon (Matt. 25:31-46) is also the description of those who gave priority to the gospel. While I agree that the "faith of Jesus" includes the teachings of Jesus, I would insist that it also relates to saving faith in him, the faith Paul explained in "the Gentile mission" through the books of Romans and Galatians. There the cross of Christ is central, and peace comes to those who have been justified through faith in Jesus (Rom. 5:1). It appears that Charles

Scriven is placing a good thing, Jesus as Lord, above the most important thing, Jesus as Savior (for that is what the word "Jesus" means). When Jesus is acknowledged as Savior, his Lordship follows as surely as the resurrection followed the cross.

LARRY KIRKPATRICK'S Response to Larry Christoffel

I appreciate Pastor Christoffel. Many Scripture references and strong identification with the Protestant Reformation: common ground!

Nevertheless, although urging the "consensus of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation," two of three branches of the Protestant Reformation did not share this "consensus." The Magisterial reformers (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) are not the whole story. There are two more groupings—both closely related to Adventism.

One is the Elizabethan Reformation, a line that brings us the Church of England, John Wesley, and Methodism. The third is known as the Radical Reformation, origin of Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Baptists. These constitute distinct theological sets.

Wesley's understanding of justification is not that of Luther: "Least of all does justification imply that God is *deceived* in those whom He justifies; that He thinks them to be what in fact, they are not, that He accounts them to be otherwise than they are."[1]

Christoffel lists Psalm 32:1 as sustaining forensic justification, leaving aside the next verse, which adds that he whose sin is covered is also one "in whose spirit there is no guile." Forensic?

Is the verb "justify," as claimed, always used in a forensic sense? Finger warns: "The words translated 'to justify' (*dikaioo*) and 'justification' (*dikaioma*, *dikaiosis*) as well as those translated 'righteous' (*dikaios* and 'righteousness' (*dikaiosyne*) come from the stem *dikaio-*. This questions attempts to sharply separate the first two—as legal—for the last two—as ethical."[2]

Christoffel holds that Paul taught original sin in Romans. He does not. "Paul does present humankind as condemned in Romans chapters 1-3, but because of personal choices and never on the basis of any doctrine of original sin."[3]

Even our understanding of Luther may need checking. Hear him: "For it is true that a man helped by grace is more than a man; indeed, the grace of God gives him the form of God and deifies him, so that even the Scriptures call him 'God' and 'God's son.'"[4]

Here, Luther speaks in the language of the deification emphasis of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Think 2 Peter 1:3, 4 (incidentally, one of the Scriptures most frequently referred to by Ellen G. White).

If advances after the 16th century are of minimal importance, then where in the grand scheme does 1844 and Seventh-day Adventism fit? Yes, we must come into consensus concerning the gospel, but in order to get there we will have to consider the consensus of Scripture—and not of just one branch of the Reformation.

LARRY KIRKPATRICK'S Response to Sari Fordham

In one kind of Adventist experience, a person is dropped into the church by the stork; in another, the individual cuts through desert and forest, bivouacking, finding his way at last to the house of prayer for all people.

Some of the most well-known contemporary voices for Adventism are those of converts. Life experience has been invested to get here. They share an experience akin to the founders.

The founders spent themselves carving out their new faith, finding God's path, and rejecting error because they saw that it had been destructive to their experience. Descendant generations, on the other hand, come upon the scene after that epic journey. Being "born" into the church means bypassing the long search. The journey is different.

These Adventists engage in defining themselves while already in Zion. They land, sooner or later, in the shadow of a denominational center—a school, hospital, or publishing house. Early are they exposed to the questionings of its academics. The mighty church looms all around them, and human failings of her members are identified with her.

I am not sure to what extent, if any, this describes the author's journey, but her article is summed in the word "ambivalence." This is about perspective.

In this light, we can understand why Fordham makes the rich young ruler an embodiment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, only to contrast him with non-Adventist physician Paul Farmer. Farmer is doing good works that benefit his fellow humans, but the rich young ruler rejects Jesus' appeal in favor of his own great possessions. He is religious, yes, but not advancing to the kingdom.

To picture Adventism as the rich young ruler is a distortion. Remember, Jesus told him to keep the commandments—considered by Fordham "an emphasis on rules." When in my first pastoral district, on dark Nevada nights, my daughter and I sat looking up into the sky and I taught her the constellations, we were not obsessing about rules or sneaking around the corner for a forbidden coffee; we were in wonderment at our Creator God. As I said, perspective.

Fordham's ambivalence is no merely Adventist phenomenon. Such feeling is found in members of other small, subcultural groups who experience uncertainty about the religion of their adolescence.

[1]John Wesley, quoted in Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), p. 115, italics Wesley.
[2]Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), fn. p. 144.
[3]See "A Wind of Doctrine Blows through the Church: the Alternative Hamartiology of Questions on Doctrine," http://www.greatcontroversy.org/gco/pdf/kir-qodconf2007amended.pdf, pp. 19-25.
[4]Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *One With God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2004), op. cit. of Martin Luther, p. 47, from Luther's Works, vol. 51, p. 58.

And yet, such ambivalence need not be automatic. Just attend the next Generation of Youth for Christ (formerly, General Youth Conference) meeting, and one will find thousands of interested, engaged, decidedly non-ambivalent young people. Some are converts, but many grew up in the church.

We must never end our journey before God does; we have much to discover about the base metal in our own hearts. I join Sari in desiring that Adventists will make a difference not just tomorrow but also today. But sometimes I tremble for those who came of age in the church. Jesus warned, "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4, KJV).

LARRY KIRKPATRICK'S Response to Charles Scriven

Scriven's declaration—that all who follow Jesus can call themselves "Adventist"—is generous. But could we call all such *Seventh-day* Adventists? No.

Code language like "journey," "authenticity," "story," and "becoming" is strung through the article. If those ideas are prominent, words like "sin" and "cleansing" are absent. A Seventh-day Adventist cannot be described apart from the divine project that addresses sin and cleansing.

Wholly arbitrarily, Scriven divides the Adventist Christian experience into two parts: the seventh-day part and the other six days. But the Sabbath is the "William Miller" story part (although Miller never embraced or kept the Sabbath), while the remaining six days are the "Jesus" part (although Jesus was the steadiest Sabbatarian the world has ever seen).

Scriven is mistaken; the Sabbath embraces all seven days. One part of the commandment addresses the day of rest, another, the six working days. Sabbath involves how one relates to God for 100 percent of his time. How then can the author make one the master story and the other mere erroneous overlay? Is his object to sunder what God has joined together?

Peacemaking, we are told, is our mission. Most other churches would make the same claim for themselves. Are there truths especially Adventist? I find little in Scriven's description that is distinctive to Adventism. Has God guided this church? One searches in vain for indication that this movement originated in any divine guidance.

In his overflight of our history, whenever the church pauses to clarify its stand, it is a decelerating step, an impediment to further "progress." Adventism is presented as a starting point, but the object is to get off the pad and as far as downrange as possible from the launch point. All acceleration; no brakes.

Really, the author is being very generous with us. It is OK to believe in error, misguided teachings, and so forth—as long as we append it to the master story. The truth will set us free, but it is alright if we insist on bondage. God will understand. He sees us "becoming," and that is the whole point. We are assigned no decisive end-time message.

I don't buy it. If Adventism is wrong, then it should be abandoned; if it is right, embraced. We cannot be at peace with part error and part truth; that is a field for scoundrels. We cannot be satisfied to be just another friendly set of deluded persons. None await such testimony. God's revelations include the definite. He has a message, so we have a message. Bible writers do not share the contemporary appreciation for ambiguity that labels a search for definiteness the disease of fundamentalism. Elijah (1 Kings 18:21), Isaiah (Isaiah 5:20), John (1 John 1:6), and Jesus (Luke 16:13) speak in definite terms. God help us if we land far downrange of these.

SARI FORDHAM'S Response to Larry Kirkpatrick

As I was reading this intelligent discourse, I was struck forcefully by the sentence: "A Seventh-day Adventist is someone who—if he could push a button and put an end to tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain—would do so immediately."

My first thought was: *wouldn't anyone?*

My second thought was more useful: *since such a button doesn't exist, what is our responsibility as Seventh-day Adventists in putting an end to tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain?*

Clearly, we, as a church, would be suffering from hubris if we took all the burdens of the world on our slight shoulders. But apathy toward injustice should not be the alternative. We cannot, with any moral clarity, relegate earthly problems to God and merely wait for his coming. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus answers the question *Who is my neighbor?* The neighbor, we learn, is the one who *acts.* If we have been called to love our neighbors as ourselves, what is our responsibility to our neighbors in Palestine, in Israel, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Guantánamo, in Congo, in Sudan, and in the United States? How do we respond to torture? Poverty? Abuse? Inequality?

These are difficult questions because they can tip into the political. Our church is global and our members represent every political persuasion. Certainly, I would feel disenfranchised if the church took an official position that belittled my political one. I, therefore, cannot advocate that others be politically alienated.

There is another consideration as well. If we as a church have a louder voice on social issues, we could endanger members. When I was a columnist for *Adventist Review*, I once wrote about the dismal human rights of a specific country. The editors feared that my column could place Adventist lives in danger and asked me to revise the piece. Once I learned their concern, I was relieved at the editors' decision. Nothing I wrote would be worth someone's death.

So these are the challenges, and they should be grappled with intelligently. But they should not prevent us from being, as Kirkpatrick called it, "agents for healing." If we are to define an Adventist as someone

who wishes to put an end to tears, death, mourning, crying, and pain, then we must *act*. We must have a social justice bend to our theology. We must see the world, and all the anguish, and we must respond. My biggest fear for my church is that instead of being agents for healing, we will sit static in our plush churches and talk about the trials before *us*, about the end of days. We will worry about our own fates, while on this day, at this hour, our neighbors are facing tribulations. Who will be their voice? Who will be their neighbor?

SARI FORDHAM'S Response to Charles Scriven

I was really moved by Charles Scriven's definition of Adventism.

His insightful summary of Adventist history made me appreciate the idealism of the church's founders. I was particularly struck by how the early church—a fledgling church—took a definitive stand against slavery. I appreciated how Scriven compared this clear moral stance with our later ambivalence and even acceptance of other societal wrongs. Some Adventist leaders in Germany supported Nazism. Some Southern churches in the United States supported segregation. To this list, one could, I think, add the genocide in Rwanda.

What good is faith if it does not inform our choices here on earth? What good is faith if our cultural prejudices are stronger than the love we preach? Because each of us is sinful, each of us is fallible; it might be useful if the church body took a more definitive stance as peacemakers—much like the early church leaders who opposed slavery. Even as I write this, my mind whirls with all the potential abuses. Still it's important to remember that we began as a congregation of pacifists. Somewhere along the way, our commitment to pacifism has gotten muffled slightly. It exists, but it is not an essential tenet of our faith. It should be. Pacifism does not mean apathy. It can be a tremendous tool in social justice, as seen in the civil rights struggle and the independence of India. Pacifism also has a biblical basis. As Scriven reminds us, when Jesus was describing his followers, he described them as peacemakers.

I was blessed by the complex definition of Adventist in this article. I appreciated how Scriven took two stories and showed where they intersected. It is fitting that we, as a people of the Bible, should define our faith through the Beatitudes. But I was most blessed by the conclusion. As someone who is full of questions, and the bane of any Sabbath school discussion, I can declare without ambivalence: "*Thanks to the gift of grace, and for the purpose of blessing to all, we take up the peacemaking mission, and join together in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*"

SARI FORDHAM'S Response to Larry Christoffel

Nearly 500 years after Martin Luther revolutionized Christianity with a message of righteousness by faith and sola scriptura, we are still grappling with what that means. For Adventists, this message takes on an additional complexity. Where do we place the writings of Ellen White?

Christoffel answers this question with precision: "The meaning of the 'gospel' we adopt must be based solidly on the authority of Scripture alone and not by Ellen White's interpretation of Scripture." The gospel Christoffel points us to is one of righteousness by faith. It's a message I think our church needs to hear again and again. Somehow, we have a tendency toward judging each other over such trivialities as diet and dress.

Let me illustrate. As I was preparing these responses, one of my friends skyped me. Like any writer worth her salt, I was happy to procrastinate. After catching up, I quickly shared with Young-shil my writing project. "Hey, what do you think an Adventist is?" I asked. Young-shil was introduced to Adventism when she attended the SDA Language Institute in South Korea. She was baptized and later became a teacher at the school. I thought she would have an interesting perspective because she's smart, funny, and has done more sermon translations than anyone I know. Her answer was much like Larry Christoffel's. Then she started laughing. That was the ideal. The reality, she felt, was symbolized by nail art.

Apparently, nail art is the current fad in South Korea. Some of Young-shil's colleagues would get elaborate designs on their fingertips. "It looks cool," Young-shil told me. Before a retreat, though, the teachers felt obligated to go to the nail salons and get their flashy designs painted over. "They just told the lady they were going to a spiritual retreat, and she knew what kind of modest design to create," Young-shil said. "That's what I dislike about Adventism. It's like we're so worried about people judging us that we behave one way in our average life and a different way in our religious life."

Perhaps as Adventism grows into the message of righteousness by faith, we can mature as a church and be concerned more about hearts than outward appearances. When I think of such a silly thing as nail art, I think of Matthew 23:27, NIV: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean." I don't mean to say the teachers were full of dead bones inside. On the contrary, I think they are victims of our church's historically stern eye on adornment.[1] I therefore welcome Christoffel's definition of Adventism and his reminder that the gospel is the foundation of our beliefs.

[1] I'm proud of the back-story on our jewelry stance—that we should spend our funds on the poor, rather than on personal decorations. But somehow we've focused so strictly on the letter—no jewelry—that we've missed the spirit. Friendship bracelets are a controversy, but fancy cars are not considered adornment, nor are expensive men's ties.

CHARLES SCRIVEN'S Response to Larry Christoffel

Near the end of Pastor Christoffel's essay comes this assertion: "The gospel… motivates for service and witness, all out of gratitude for what God in Jesus Christ has done for us." I agree with him, and this sentence is so important that I think we may say our overall agreement is substantial.

Christoffel, who sees himself as an "Evangelical Adventist," says the true Adventist is the one who proclaims a "*forensic* gospel." But his account suffers from what "Evangelical Adventism" typically suffers from: an emphasis on grace as forgiveness of sins, coupled with a deficit of emphasis on grace as empowerment for discipleship.

In the New Testament the "justification" of the sinner is part of the message, but not all of it. Here the resurrection is at least as central as the cross: "If Christ has not been raised," so Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15, "your faith if futile and you are still in your sins" (verse 17, NRSV). And the power that brought Jesus to life makes *us* "alive in Christ" (verse 22, NRSV)—turns us into new people just as it turned Paul from persecutor to witness (1 Cor. 15:9, 10; cf. Rom. 6:1-4).

A second deficit follows from the first. If you do not emphasize empowerment for discipleship, you take little interest in the stories that define discipleship. And except for a single reference to Matthew 24, Pastor Christoffel, who refers often to the Bible, says nothing about the actual words and deeds of Jesus reported in the Gospels. He thus turns Adventism into a message of comfort for sinners when it is also a message of new life for sinners—new life far more countercultural than you might guess from, say, his too-easy invocation of the Christian obligation "to honor secular powers."

The Christian life *is* the life of gratitude. But Christoffel has neglected, as Paul Harvey might have said, "the rest of the story."

CHARLES SCRIVEN'S Response to Sari Fordham

The prize for humor goes to Sari Fordham, who (new Adventists: sorry about this inside joke) describes Postum as a "gateway beverage." The remark works—but not for any reader—and this underscores her point that Adventism is a specific culture that you grow into.

Fordham's larger point is that "cultural," or "reflexive," Adventism falls short. By reflexive Adventism she means, I gather, an Adventism that is mechanical and shallow, that is inattentive to the depths of faith, and that is *merely* cultural.

The author envisions instead an "intentional" religion, one where you wrestle with the "hard implications" of faith and fully embrace your "responsibility to others." Here she appeals to a Gospel story (about the rich young ruler) and a Gospel teaching (about the face of Christ reflected in the face of others). She also cites a convincing contemporary exemplar of the way of life she admires.

Fordham calls us to compassion and justice, the great "ideals" of the gospel. That is what the true Adventist cares about. I agree with her. There is, I believe, an Adventist take on *how* to care about these things—on how to act when justice is resisted and how to cope when we fall short of these ideals. Fordham does not address this issue, but it does need to be addressed.

CHARLES SCRIVEN'S Response to Larry Kirkpatrick

This is the most "traditional" of the essays. Some, just for that reason, will embrace it, and others, for the same reason, will resist it.

I find here much to agree with. Grace and law (except for distorted law) do *not* conflict. We *can* know the power of Christ's resurrection today. We *can* act for the right and *can* show others, by our lives, the advantages of loyalty to God. And all of these—insight, ability, and mission—are *gifts*.

But Kirkpatrick focuses on "insider" motifs—Jesus in heaven "blotting out" sin, the notions of "sacrifice and cleansing," the idea of God "on trial," the atonement's meaning for "unfallen beings on other worlds." To the average person these motifs are obscure; to just about anyone they are difficult. And if not supplemented by a wider range of biblical language—language that may be less "distinctively" Adventist—these motifs narrow vision or even distort it.

The author, for example, has the world "spiraling downward in flames," but as the "now" and the "not yet" of New Testament hope make clear, this is not the whole truth about Christian eschatology. He speaks of "predictive prophecy" as if events unfold just the way prophets say they will, but the Jonah story demonstrates that, at least sometimes, prophecy succeeds by failing—succeeds, that is, by changing people's minds so they can start off in a new direction.

Still, Kirkpatrick's vision shows how a vision acceptable to conservative Adventists may point toward genuine engagement of human need. The church must witness and teach, but there is more: "The wholeness we embrace leads us to work for health enhancement, to make contributions in science, to minister to the weakest of the weak, and to lift whomever we can toward true humanity..."

Here is the paradox of apocalyptic: you *see* tomorrow—the "victory," as Kirkpatrick writes, "not yet complete at the cross"—and yet you address *today*. This paradox defines, at least in part, what a true Adventist is about. AT

Jesus Was Onto Something!

By Alden Thompson

Several titles tussled over this column:

Description: "Liberals and Conservatives: Bridging the Concrete-Abstract Divide."

Confrontation: "Are People More Important Than God?"

Subtlety (the winner): "Jesus Was Onto Something!"

My goal is to shout from the housetops Jesus' simple solution to our human dilemma: "In everything," he said, "do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12, NRSV).

But knowing what I know about humans, I could also blurt out: "Your list is too short, Jesus. It's not even a list, just a simple principle. And it's a summary of your entire Bible? Where are your lists of doctrines and behaviors?"

"Those are often helpful," I can hear him say. "But that one principle is key."

Jesus could also note his two-principle summary of the law: loving God wholeheartedly and loving others as we love ourselves. But his solution to our long lists lies in his statement that all Scripture "hangs" on these two commands. All of our doctrines and behaviors are linked to them and illustrate them, but they are a notch below them (Matt. 22:35-40).

Thus—and this is the bombshell—some "truths" are more important than others. And the most important one focuses on people. Loving your neighbor as yourself, declares Paul, sums up the whole law (Gal. 5:14, NRSV).

And here my confrontational title kicks in:

"You left God completely out of your summary, Paul, just as Jesus did in Matt. 7:12. Are people more important than God?"

The Apostle John chimes in: "We cannot see God," he exclaims. "So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see?" (1 John 4:20, CEV).

And Matthew reminds us of the sheep and the goats: In judgment, Jesus declared, our fate is based not on how we worship God but on how we treat his children (Matt. 25:31-46). In short, the best way to worship God is by serving people.

When we bring the pieces together, Jesus' simple principle neatly solves three problems haunting the church:

1. Neutralizing the Concrete-Abstract Divide. While everyone lives in this concrete world, we live in it in different ways. Liberals revel in the complex nuances of the visual and performing arts, without projecting those realities so clearly into the future. Conservatives are more cautious here, fearing the seductive allure of our senses, while being powerfully drawn to a personal God and a future world that more closely mirrors the realities of this one.

Jesus' command means that we will permit both liberals and conservatives to revel in their joys and that we will respect their fears. Thus we can live together instead of splitting along liberal and conservative lines, as usually happens in our modern world.

2. Delivering Us From Our Struggles Over God, Heaven, and Human Hearts. Our most intense doctrinal debates involve mysteries we cannot know, cannot see, cannot explore: God, heaven, and the secrets of any human heart other than our own. Jesus says we must allow each other to keep our pictures, our hopes, our fears as the Spirit shapes us into God's likeness.

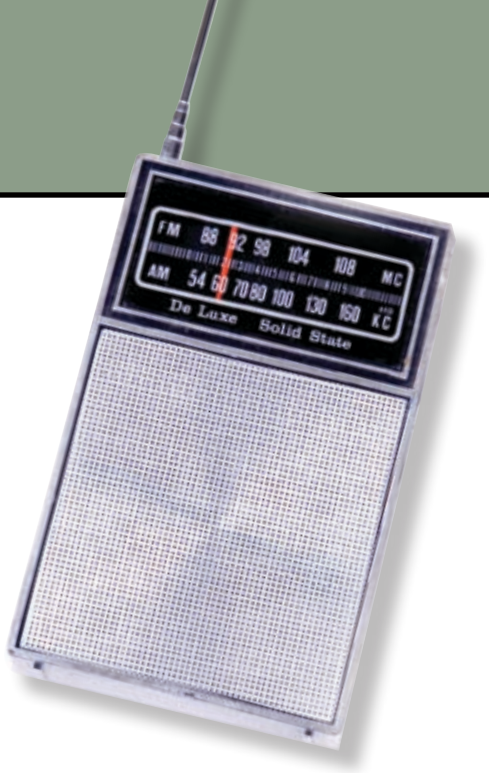
3. Saving Our Lists of Doctrines and Behaviors, but Reorganizing Them. Because Jesus' simple principle summarizes all Scripture, we never throw anything away. Every piece fits into the puzzle, illustrating how different people in different times and places thought about God and sought to serve him. In Paul's words, everything in Scripture becomes an "example" for us (1 Cor. 10:11).

Yes, Jesus was onto something—something huge. If we hear him, Adventism could be the unique church on planet Earth.

Thus we can live together instead of splitting along liberal and conservative lines, as usually happens in our modern world.

A Timely Season to Plan for a Momentous GC Session

BY EDWIN A. SCHWISOW



My missionary parents banished me to America in 1969. I was 16 years old, and just days before the United Airlines flight touched down in Portland, Ore., an engineer named Neil Armstrong had planted a non-organic version of the Stars and Stripes on the moon. Three weeks later, a far-spacier crowd gathered on "Yasgur's farm" in New York to draw the generational boundary line in the mud, between "Aquarius" and "Antiquarian."

That September I enrolled in an Adventist boarding school and got a job building houses (on weekends) and working at Harris Pine Mills every afternoon—a combination that allowed me to pay my entire tuition while earning a four-point GPA. (Things like this were actually possible, back then!)

For eight years I'd lived in Chulumani, Sud Yungas, Bolivia, site of one of the then most-remote hospitals on the Adventist missionary map, where we as Adventists played a small but significant role in defeating Ché Guevara's late-1967 pro-Leninist insurgency. It was the gestating influence in my determination to become what many said was a career oxymoron—an "Adventist journalist."

Forbidden Information

So when my parents wisely exiled me back to America for higher education, I expeditiously imported into my dormitory room a forbidden transistor radio (back then, radios were deemed inappropriate for dormitory-dwelling Adventist high-schoolers). Thus, I made doubly sure my radio had the ability to capture the local university/public radio station, while concealed under both a bed sheet *and* a thick, sound-insulating blanket. This became my cave of information, the root-patch of my forbidden tree of knowledge. And several times a year, I would draw cash from my dirt-poor bank account and send $5 (now worth $25) to the local public broadcast station.

The independent, Adventist-oriented journals, such as *Adventist Today*, that began life during the Boomer prime (1965 and 1995) are analogous to what National Public Radio and National Public Television were, and are today, to the general intellectual public.

This era produced on the national scene a new birth of journalism—journalism that at times inflamed, but ultimately purged the nation of a classically cynical administration that, as none before it, saw those it governed as its opponents.

And within less than 10 years of Watergate, what had happened in national politics was being replicated with Adventist wrinkles in the fabric of the church, and for the first time in Adventist history, an independent press of high intellectual standing played a role in helping sort out what had happened and how to keep it from happening again.

Different Pockets

Today some of our prime donors who have contributed through the years are caught in the squeeze of the national economic wringer. Yet *Adventist Today* is encouraged that an increasing number of smaller donations are helping us carry forward, despite some very trying economic times.[1]

We have made operating cuts, reduced hours and salaries, and even asked some to work as unpaid volunteers. We know times are tough, but we're dedicated to moving forward, onward, and upward—in circulation, in influence, in efficiency, and in the respect of laity and leadership.

In less than 15 months, the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta will open—a session the likes of which come about only once every 20 years, with an election that promises to institutionalize a dramatically new alignment of power.

We still need about $30,000 to provide the type of on-site, gavel-to-gavel coverage the church deserves in such a pivotal year. Consider this a challenge and opportunity, and share with Ervin Taylor or myself any ideas you may have—matching funds, challenge funds, new outreaches—to help us begin to prepare strategically and financially for this once-in-a-generation session.

Edwin A. Schwisow is development director for Adventist Today.

[1]In addition to subscription sales, it takes about $80,000 in contributed funds each year to keep *Adventist Today* financially healthy, on time, with the resources to pursue often costly stories. That's about $40 for every subscriber (hard copy and net). In the past, generally about $60,000 a year has come from large donors, with $20,000 a year from smaller donations. In today's economic climate, we believe that ratio could change. We need more and more donors able to give $100 to $1,000 a year, to help us through these times.

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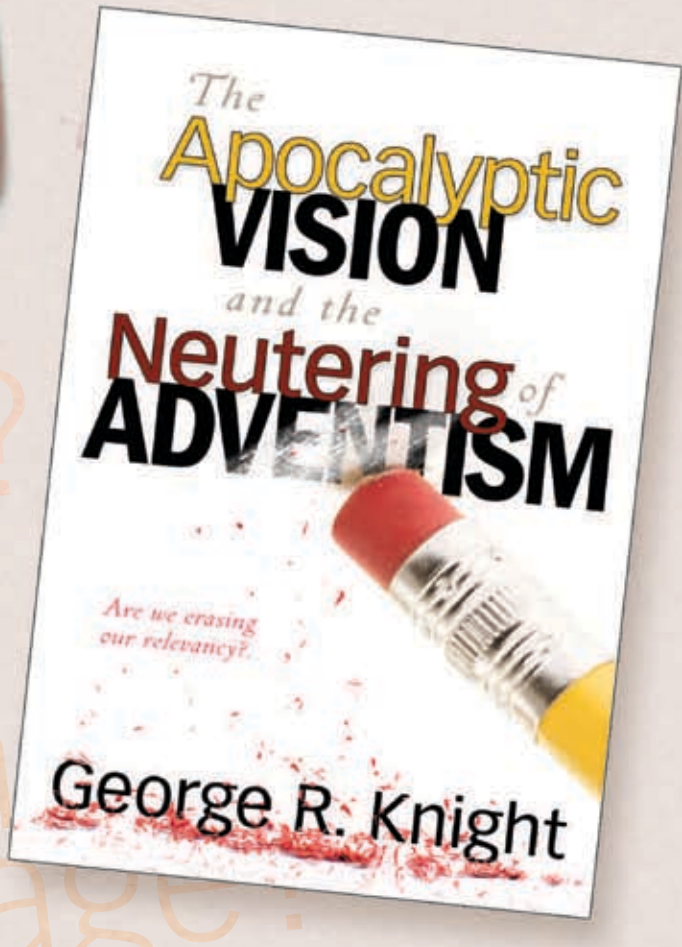

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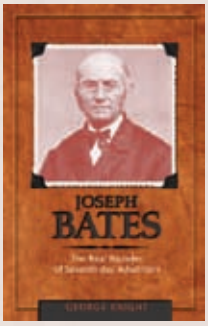

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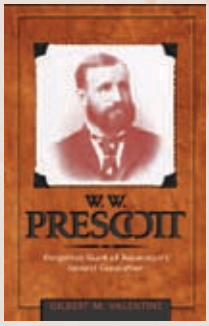

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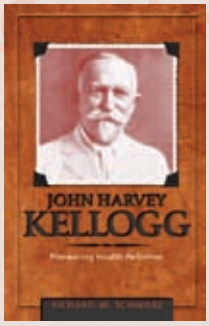

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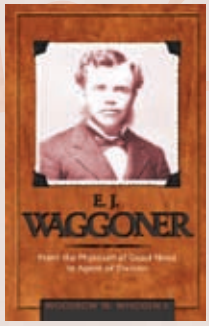

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7 QUESTIONS for...Elizabeth Talbot

By Marcel Schwantes

Elizabeth Talbot was born in Argentina to Adventist missionaries. After many years in corporate America, she became a pastor and held positions at Vallejo Drive Adventist church in Glendale, Calif., and the Grace Place in Alhambra, Calif., where for some time she was the only female senior pastor in her conference. Wherever Talbot has preached, within months her congregations doubled in size.

In 2009, the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) made a drastic move by changing its programming and bringing in Talbot to the new daily broadcast team (joining pastor Mike Tucker). Talbot made history by becoming the first female pastor evangelist at VOP.

Talbot received a master's degree in biblical studies from the Haggard Graduate School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University and an M.A. degree in organizational behavior. She is now a candidate for a Ph.D. in biblical studies under the mentorship of renowned New Testament scholar Andrew Lincoln at the University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom.

Talbot is an adjunct professor of biblical studies for the graduate school of theology at Azusa Pacific University. She just completed a devotional booklet published by Pacific Press titled *Matthew: Prophecy Fulfilled.* She is an international lecturer and travels throughout the world, preaching and teaching the gospel.

1 How excited are you about your new position at the Voice of Prophecy? This is a huge step for VOP—a sacred, male-dominated Adventist institution for so long—to hire a woman pastor evangelist in a gospel-driven program. What does this mean for the future of VOP?

This is the happiest time in my professional life because I get to preach/teach the gospel of Jesus Christ every day to thousands of people. I am humbled and excited, all at the same time. In regard to a "gospel-driven" program, this was H.M.S. Richards' vision all along. In 1942, he preached a message titled "We Would See Jesus" in the midst of a world in turmoil. I think it summarizes what his mission was then and what the mission is now: to lift up Jesus Christ that all may be drawn to him. In regard to being a woman pastor, well...men in positions of authority can open the doors for women in certain areas, and I am very thankful to Fred Kinsey and Mike Tucker for their vision and their commitment in this area. They invited me to join this "gospel" team (along with Connie Vandeman Jeffery) and in doing so they made a statement that I hope many others will imitate. I envision the future of VOP expanding through new teaching/preaching ministries (it has already started with an Internet radio station, podcasting/mp3 downloadable files, Internet video clips, etc.) while lifting up Jesus higher, and higher.

2 Specifically, what's the "theological agenda" of your new broadcasts with Mike Tucker?

We laid out our agenda in the very first program we did together. It is to study the whole Bible with "gospel glasses." We chose the story of the road to Emmaus recorded in Luke 24 to explain our main principle for interpreting the Bible. It is in this story that Jesus explains how to interpret Scripture. He says to them: "'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." Luke 24:25-27, NASB. Jesus provides the best interpretive rule: all the Law of Moses and the prophets are about him. This is our "theological agenda."

3 The risk of Adventist listeners getting that close to the foot of the cross of Christ is that they could end up minimizing the doctrines they grew up with. Some even leave the church after discovering so much grace. How do you graft the new approach into 28 fundamentals and keep traditional Adventism listening?

I think that one of the reasons why some reject the doctrines they grew up with when they accept righteousness by faith in Jesus' death is that the ... [method of] presenting the Bible as a whole, pointing to Jesus' salvific event, was not always used when teaching the fundamental Adventist doctrines. Many times we explained the doctrines as pearls in a collar when, in fact, we are supposed to have ONE BIG DIAMOND that we look at through different angles. The doctrines should always end up in Jesus at the very core. Our doctrines should be straws through which we drink the Living Water. "THE TRUTH" is a person. Adventism should be re-envisioned, challenged, and celebrated within this paradigm.

4 Regarding female ordination, you've been quoted in another interview (by yours truly) as saying, "There is not much distinction between 'commissioned' versus 'ordained' ministers. It is a play on words in order to keep the worldwide church happy." Having said that, are you finding more or less acceptance as a woman pastor, especially now that your broadcasts are heard around the world?

I understand the value of being culturally sensitive. My property line in this area is to be faithful to my calling while being truly myself, the way God created me. God is in charge of removing the barriers, not me. At VOP, we have received opposition from different venues because I am a woman pastor (letters, radio cancellation, etc.); it comes with the territory. At the same time, our audiences are increasing in certain areas where female listeners are a majority, and we are getting wide support for our new programs from both genders. Many women across the globe feel encouraged with some of the changes and statements by our denominational leaders (including the General Conference president). My personal calling is not to rally groups to further women's rights in this organization; my calling is to preach/teach the gospel. But I recognize the importance of the role many play in changing the status quo in this regard, and I support them, celebrate them, and am a recipient of the fruit of their efforts.

5 Personally for you, besides the salvation message, what does Christ's ministry reveal most about his mission to the world?

"Salvation for All in Christ" spills over to many different areas; perhaps two of the most important

ones are emotional health and inclusivity. When the gospel is preached, it should remove shame and produce dignity in everyone, and the religious community should take an active part in making sure it is that way (focusing on the poor, destitute, marginalized, addicted, etc.). Furthermore, EVERYONE is included in the kingdom of God! Not just one elite group, not just those on this side but also those on *the other side* of the lake partake of the good news of Jesus. I feel very strongly about our role in helping people "emerge" to their healthy selves. When people understand their worth in God's eyes and that their salvation is assured in Jesus' sacrifice, then they are motivated from the inside out (internal locus of control) to live healthy lives for themselves, others, and God.

What advice do you have for a woman who senses a call to pastoral ministry but is hesitant to accept because her family and peers do not agree with such a break in tradition and gender roles?

Your call is vertical, not horizontal. If you believe that you have been called by God and therefore empowered every step of the way by his grace, then "horizontal" relationships become secondary to that call. That is what Jesus meant when he said, "unless you hate your father and mother for my cause." He was talking about priorities, not the violation of the fifth commandment. My advice is to heed your "vertical call." He will make a way where there is no way, just like the parting of the Sea of Reeds—regularly known as the Red Sea. The desire to preach the gospel is like fire in my bones (this is one of my "trademark" descriptions of myself). It supersedes anything and everything.

How does an Adventist organization/ministry (such as VOP) change?

My favorite formula for organizational development is: "preserve the core and stimulate progress." What is the core? At VOP, I know the core of our ministry is to lift up Jesus and to teach/preach the plan of salvation through Jesus' sacrifice as the core understanding through which all other Biblical topics should be interpreted (see answer #3). With a clear core, then we move forward with new methodologies, frameworks, and paradigms—both technical and stylistic—as well as new ministry developments. We stimulate progress by challenging, questioning, pondering, dialoguing, and celebrating.

For info about the Voice of Prophecy daily broadcast/podcast and other programming and products, visit www.vop.com.

Adventist Man

Days of Creation X Commandments Sipping Carnage

If the sun wasn't created until the fourth day, how on earth do we know that the first three "days" were 24-hour days?

God doesn't require a solar-powered timepiece to keep track of time. God owns a quartz-plutonium-digital model, complete with rim symbols π, €, ∞, ☺ and ©.

Even when days *appear* to be longer, such as during summer or the television rerun season or while you're watching soccer, they're not.

Did the Ten Commandments originally come with numbers?

No. Unlike days of the week and *Deal or No Deal*, the original Top Ten made their entrance without corresponding numbers.

Adventist Man should point out (and he shall) that many visual artists depict the engraved commandments with Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV . . .), which is exceedingly strange because Moses lived c. 1,450 B.C, whereas Roman culture didn't appear until c. 750 B.C.

In Egypt 5,000 years ago, the simple strokes that expressed small numbers were actually precursors to the Arabic numerals we employ today. However, Roman numerals *seem* older because they are not used currently, with the exception of pretentious Super Bowls.

This brings to Adventist Man's mind the fabled chronology of the three kings: Rehoboam, Jeroboam, and the ancient king that's still afloat, Styrofoam. Adventist Man's mind is a mystery wrapped in an enigma.

Will the Adventist Church be creating a series of feature-length films, as the Latter-day Saints have done?

If it does happen, Adventist Man suggests you look for these offerings: *The Chronicles of Nuteena; 101 Donations; The Sound of Sanctified Music; E.G; The Cradle Roll Will Rock; V for Vespers; The Pathfinder Files–A Level Eye; Miracle on Old Columbia Pike; 28 Fundamental Days; Any Given Sabbath; The Dark White; and Lord of No Rings.*

The Bible doesn't really prohibit drinking alcohol, so what's wrong with a little drink now and then?

Adventist Man wonders how anyone who calls herself/himself "progressive" could be so ethically regressive. In the United States alone, alcohol is a factor in about:

- 50 percent of all homicides
- 50 percent of all rapes
- 72 percent of all assaults, including spousal violence
- 50 percent of all child-abuse cases

As many college students will die of alcohol-related causes as will receive their master's and doctorate degrees! So don't tell Adventist Man you're "socially responsible" because you buy efficient light bulbs and you recycle.

Suck it up and quit supporting a killer.

Adventist Man Is Retiring

Adventist Today *is looking for a new Adventist Man. Our author of this column is retiring. If you are interested in writing for this column please submit three examples of your satire. It should meet the same standards as the "old" Adventist Man. Send your writing examples to J. David Newman by email: adventisttoday1966@gmail.com. Adventist Man is anonymous until such time as the author wishes to reveal himself (if ever!).*

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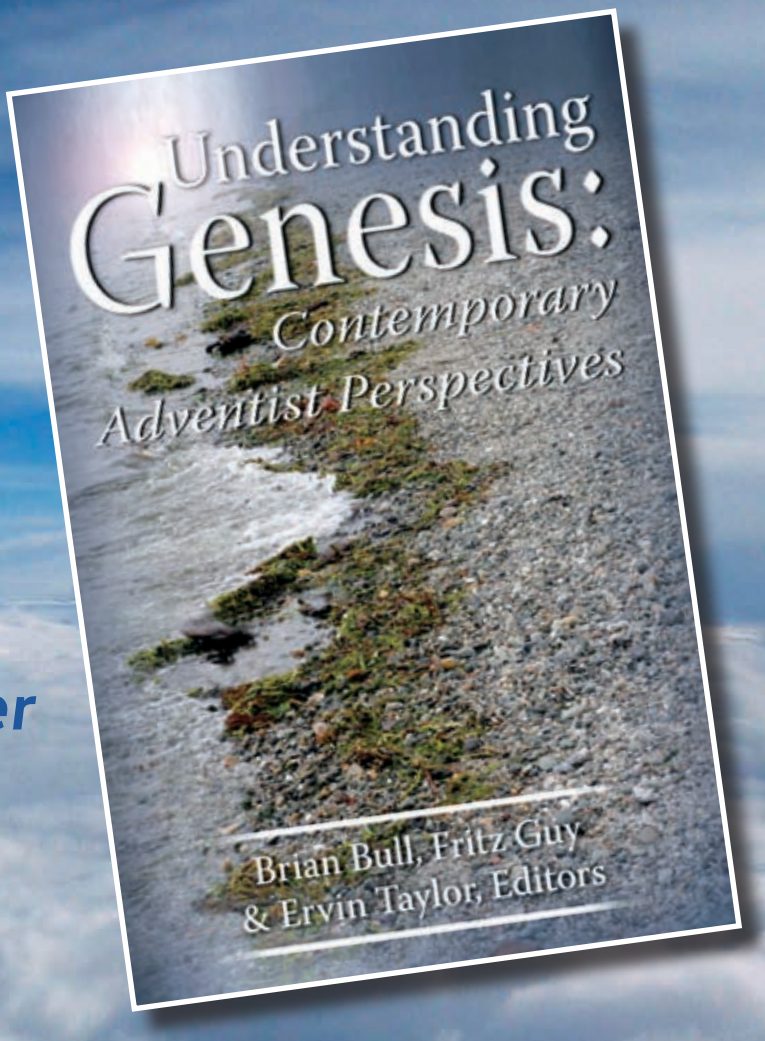

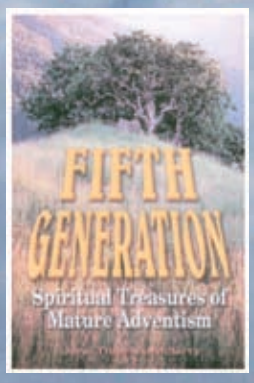

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