July 1, 2011

The Latest News and Columns from Adventist Today

Brand new magazine issue online and in homes:* Headlined by the cover article, “Is Ellen White REALLY a Lesser Light?” the summer issue of Adventist Today is now posted at atoday.org and is in the mail to paper-and-ink subscribers. Enjoy the Fourth-of-July Weekend with an extra serving of Adventist Today news, analysis, and inspiration — and the return of Adventist Man! Read more

How Then Shall We Live? Cindy Tutsch worries about rampant obesity, low achievement, tepid spirituality, and sedentary living in a world where leisure time is filled with computer entertainment, limitless television, digital games, and thousands of movies at our fingertips. Are the old-time concerns about theater-attendance still relevant in a world where the theater may well be one's own home? Read more

How Do YOU Define Sin? A lot of people sneer at 'sin,' so medieval-sounding, so pejorative, so ill-defined. Herb Douglass says our definition of 'sin' ultimately informs our understanding of salvation. Is it the act or the impulse, the temptation or the surrendering to temptation? Enjoy the practical, thoughtful theology in "What Does Sin Have to do with Righteousness?"

LSU Resignation Saga: Stranger than Fiction: On June 10, 2011, three La Sierra University (LSU) faculty members and a board member resigned. News of their resignations set off a storm of rumor and speculation.

The stranger-than-fiction saga came to the attention of the general Adventist public with a short announcement by LSU administration. Four individuals — Jeff Kaatz, Vice President for university advancement; Jim Beach, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; Gary Bradley part-time contract biology professor; and Lenny Darnell, member of the Board of Trustees

The Kingdom's Speech: Does the way we
pronounce the word "Adventist" identify our qualities as members? One denominational leader is so serious about the idea, he’s published a lead editorial about it in a prominent church publication. Ervin Taylor says the very idea is ludicrous — indeed dangerous — in a world of high racial diversity, constant immigration, and colliding dialects. Read more

Significant Pastoral Resignation: After the resignations of four La Sierra University staff, faculty, and board member, a pastor formerly of several large Adventist churches has resigned his credentials as an ordained Adventist minister. He declares he has lost confidence in the selective way the church punishes and rewards those who hold divergent views. Find out more about him, and his reasons for leaving. Read more

Sunday-keeping Alliance Launched in Europe: Why should secularist Europe join in a crusade to establish Sunday as a united day of rest? Pastor Raafat Kamal, director for Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the North European Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in St. Albans, near London, says: "We support the notion that people need a day of rest to achieve a life/work-balance to maintain the health and safety of workers. This is modeled by God in the biblical creation. At the same time, we want to be sure that those who don't have Sunday as...a day of rest will be respected and tolerated. Read more

The Heart of Faith: Do you question if God exists? Are you living in an attachment-disordered relationship with him? Are you hypervigilant about his faults, trying to maintain control over your own life at all costs? Read more

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Adventist Review Editor Should Either Apologize or Resign

Submitted Jun 28, 2011
By Ervin Taylor

On June 9, 2011, Bill Knott, the Adventist Review editor, wrote that Adventists who pronounce the word “Adventist” in a manner different from the way most Anglo Adventists pronounce it, do not have “a full understanding” of their church.

When I first read this, my reaction was simply that this was an absurd thing to say. How one pronounces a word in a given language can reflect a number of things, running all the way from geographic location to socio-economic status. However, to say that the way a member pronounces the name of their church has something to do with how well they “understand” their church strikes me as nonsensical.

I submit that this nonsensical statement should be taken much more seriously because Dr. Knott is the editor of the “flagship journal” of the Adventist Church. For the editor to make such an arrogant and condescending statement is truly astonishing. What is being said is that there is one “right” way to pronounce Adventist and that right way is the Anglo Adventist way of saying it, and anyone who does not say it the Anglo way does not “understand.”

Upon further reflection in conversation with a colleague, an even more disturbing issue was raised by Dr. Knott in his editorial. He seems to be reaching back into the sectarian history of our group longing to return to a time when we were all White Anglos. Maintaining sectarian boundaries as a “particular people” was high on our collective agenda. Within that context, making sure that we pronounced a word in our name in the “correct” manner was important since we wanted to distinguish ourselves from the “them,” those who were “outside the truth.” And who, at that time, was an entire body of people totally “outside the truth?”

I call on Dr. Knott to realize that his editorial was an embarrassment to him and his church, apologize for what, let us hope, was a quickly-drafted editorial written when he under a deadline, or was tired, or perhaps not feeling well. We can all forgive him under those circumstances.

However, if he is really serious and stands by what he wrote, I would suggest that Dr. Knott be asked to resign since having the editor of the Adventist Review in the 21st Century espousing what is, at best, linguistic imperialism, and at worse, linguistic racism, is simply inexcusable. If there is no recanting on his part and if he remains the editor of the Adventist Review, a dark stigma will attach itself to the institutional Adventist Church.

Elaine Nelson

Every Adventist around the world should be incensed that because they may pronounce the name of their church in an "unapproved" manner they are somewhat inferior to the anglos who pronounce it "correctly."

Evidently, the editor has no more important function than to write such articles in order to earn his pay. Is this indication that the SDA headquarters is overstocked with employees?
Timo Onjukka

"advenTSSSSK"?
Perhaps Bill is the one with less than "full understanding".
With some serious questions within immediate purview completely unadressed,
to focus on such a non-issue raises some questions itself....
it's not been a slow-news year.

Elaine Nelson

But the most "interesting" news is not about to be published by the Review. You get that from the independent news of SDA like this. The numerous books exposing the "dirty tricks" of Adventism is found on independent publishers. The Review is like Pravda for Russians "all the news we want you to know."

Trevor Hammond

-->Ok. The honourable Dr Taylor has made some valid points and his call for the immediate resignation and/or apology from the Editor in question seems to be very, very, credible and valid thereby warranting such a call; BUT on the other hand, is it AS he says it is? Or, is it only just a cheap underhanded attempt to distort and twist the gist and mood of the article in order to discredit the said honourable Editor Mr Bill Knott? Methinks so!

-->I find the article content in good taste and humour with the writer very clearly introducing his topic and the rationale behind his take on it.

-->Mr Bill Knott writes in his opening remarks: “Every editor ought to be allowed to be a crank at least once in his career. Perhaps this is my turn at the handle.

For the past 20 years I have been afflicted by an increasing auditory “tic” as I hear members of the church pronounce the name of this 148-year-old denomination. While the large majority still pronounce the name of this faith as Ad´-ventist—meaning one who believes in the Second Ad´-vent of Jesus Christ—a growing number regularly rely on a pronunciation that mystifies much more than it explains our core belief in the second coming of Jesus.

Yes, I know: you can find dictionaries, both online and bound, that allow for a second pronunciation—Ad-ven´-tist—proving only that these otherwise-reliable references are catering to the usage patterns adopted by English speakers who remain unaware of the history—and the meaning—of the name.

-->Also, he ends with: “On that great and final Day—and every day between now and then—I will claim as brother or sister anyone who shares with me those core beliefs that “will convict the inquiring mind,” however they voice our common name.”

-->Here is a link to the article which reveals that it is far from the accusations hurled at it by the honourable Dr Taylor.

Adventist in Christ

Ron Corson

Really you want someone to resign for the crime of "at best, linguistic imperialism, and at worse, linguistic racism". Well that sounds to me like taking political correctness so far as to be non nonsensical. Potaytoe - Patahtoe to the absurd, I wonder which of those two is the imperialist and which is the racist form of potato?

Ervin Taylor

Ron: I guess we all have different levels of concern about the use of a dialect to classify individuals. I guess you are not sensitized to racist-based criteria. As far as I know, your example has never had any racist connections.

Ron Corson

Actually I did not see any race mentioned in the Knott article or in your discussion of the article, so if you can't say a particular race is being spoken against or referred to you really can't call someone a racist. That the English language is Anglo oriented is simply a fact of history...that is where it originated after all. If you assume racial connotations in his article why did you not point them out. From my listening I have heard both pronunciations come from various racial groups including Anglo's.

I would be completely with you if you were calling for the resignation of people at the Review for making so many stupid statements. But then who would be left at the Review if we did that?

humble reader

How do you pronounce "pianist?" Do you think that you understand what a piano is? Or the society of people that play the instrument? I do not share Mr. Knott's "auditory tic" when I hear any particular pronunciation of "Adventist" or "pianist."

The editorial may have been intended as a humorous curmudgeonly rant. But I do find the following excerpt offensive:

"You smile, for you realize that mispronunciation is one of our social cues that the speaker does not have a full understanding of the entity they are describing. And you are right: you may rejoice —discreetly, now, in a humbly Ad´-ven-tist sort of way—in your rightness."

Elaine Nelson

Humble reader: It is offensive to expect someone who pronounced Adventist differently is, at the
same time, not fully understanding the entity they describe.

Horrors! Does anyone "fully understand Adventism" with its variety of beliefs, programs, pastors preaching many different things and all the while claiming to be the same around the world? Where can that be found? Surely, not in the Review offices.

---

**Edwin A. Schwisow**  
4 days ago  
Reply

There's little doubt that the pronunciation of "Adventist" may have some vague correlation with the number of years a person has been in the church—in NORTH AMERICA. But certainly this is NOT true of all countries where English is spoken as a second language, or which favor British patterns of pronunciation.

---

**George Tichy**  
2 days ago  
Reply

I don't care about his apology or resignation. BUT, the article is so outrageous that some action is needed. Did he write the article as part of his work? I bet so. Thus, he should REFUND the church's coffers for the amount equivalent to the time he spent working on that piece of garbage. The Church will absorb the printing expenses.

I just wonder: Are we now running a holy dictatorship where people are even required to pronounce certain words in a certain way? Are ADventists becoming crazy, or are AdVENtists just loosing their minds???

MR. EDITOR, just give the money back publicly and you will be fine... Otherwise, just resign before the Church pays you for another piece of literary garbage.

---

**Elaine Nelson**  
2 days ago  
Reply

No reputable magazine (is the Review "reputable?) would spend one penny for such a piece of trash. Why it was deleted by a copyist before going to press may be because he is the editor!

---

**George Tichy**  
2 days ago  
Reply

What amazes me, too, is that we don't hear any official word about this issue. It sounds (the lack of sound...) like the administration is fine with this absurd article and they will certainly protect this employee no matter what. Just outrageous!

---

**Bohemian Vegan**  
2 days ago  
Reply

AD-ventists are the ones who are regular SDAs. Ad-VENT-ists are those who aren't SDA. heh
George Tichy

Brilliant! (But tithes from both are always welcome, heh?)

Elaine Nelson

How does one pronounce "AG-NOSTIC"? We are legion.

George Tichy

Elaine:
In English: Ag-NÓS-tic (regular agnostics)
In French: Ag-nos-TÍC (irregular agnostics, I guess)

I was born amongst irregulars, but I live amongst regulars. Go figure...
Just glad to be one of them anyway. Thus I don't need to pretend I know anything! And don't have to fight about things I don't know either...

........

Seminary Student

interesting.

Posting as

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Pastor Resigns in Wake of La Sierra University Controversy

Submitted Jul 1, 2011
By Atoday Editorial Team

The ripples are ever widening in the La Sierra University fountain of turmoil. Now a pastor is declaring his unwillingness and inability to identify with many official Adventist Church actions, particularly in unequal disciplining of employees. To him, the most recent resignation of four individuals associated with La Sierra University is the proverbial straw on the camel’s back.

Steven Hadley, in his own words below, declares he can no longer accept official church positions on social equality and basic justice. He has made his letter of pastoral resignation available exclusively to Adventist Today, in the hope it will bring wider understanding of his frustration with the cavalier lack of due process within Adventist church employment circles.

June 29, 2011

Ricardo Graham
President
Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
P.O. Box 5005
Westlake Village, CA 91359

Dear Elder Graham:

I regret to inform you that at this time I do not consider myself an ordained minister in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Accordingly, I am returning my ordination certificate to you, and asking that you remove my name from your list of ordained ministers.

For some time I have strongly disagreed with the denomination regarding issues of social equality and basic justice. Socially, I simply cannot support the Church’s attempts to “have it both ways” by encouraging women to enter ministry, but denying them ordination and certain leadership roles; by gladly accepting the talent and resources of the gay community, but denying them the pastoral support and blessing we give those in heterosexual relationships. Regarding issues of justice, I have anguished over the Church’s inconsistent administration of its rules and policies; and in most of the cases I have witnessed over the past half century, a lack of procedural and substantive due process in matters of conflict and discipline.

Many times I have thought of writing this letter, but stopped, because I hoped the day would come when I could do more to affect some small change. I have continued to encourage basic justice in the Church as I served on local boards and committees. I even drafted and helped pilot a justice branch of church governance for the Southeastern California Conference. As a former Adventist pastor now working in a political setting, I have had many opportunities to care for people and help them think about what matters most in this life and the next. But, sadly I have spent more time trying to disprove the assumption that, because I retain my ordination I must concur with Adventism’s social views, and, therefore, I must be judgmental, exclusive and intolerant. I have gladly accepted this challenge, and have not hid the fact that I am ordained, even when it cost me endorsements in a recent election. But, the recent events at La Sierra University have prompted me to finally write this letter.

Others may debate and weigh the morality of what the four individuals who were asked to resign said or did, but my concerns have to do with the inexplicable lack of fairness and due process in the Church’s administration of justice. You and I can both name others across North America who have said or done far worse things, even criminal, but no one asked them to resign; or if they did, quietly found them a new place to continue to work. Yes, sometimes Adventist justice varies from situation to situation based on the wrongdoer’s repentance and cooperation and the options available to a grace-oriented administrator/judge. But, more often than not the variations in justice are based on such things as who and how many are watching, the expectations of those watching, the relationship of the wrongdoer to the judge or other people of value in the community, whether the judge “owes” the wrongdoer for past favors or help, whether the wrongdoer knows damaging information about the judge, whether the wrongdoer is or will be a loyal and valuable subordinate, etc.

Having asked for the resignations of these four individuals for these alleged offenses based on an inadvertent discovery, will you...
now do the same to all others who have committed equal or greater offenses for whom you have or will receive “evidence”? No, you
cannot, at least not for long. To do so would be to encourage a chilling witch hunt across Adventism in North America. I suggest that
to be fair and respected, the final action in this matter needs to be proportionate to that taken in response to similar and greater
offenses in the larger context of the administration of justice in North American Adventism. If it does not, this incident will simply
become another landmark case in our sad saga of unequal justice.

Due process begins with such basic elements as an administrator/judge who is detached from and neutral to the prosecution of the
offense(s) in question. Having taken on the role of the prosecution in meeting with the four individuals, and on behalf of the church
leadership asked for their resignations; you or any other church administrator cannot now be detached and neutral as the chair of
the judging body, the Board of Trustees. I know you are leading this process in the way the denomination routinely conducts business,
but the realization that a person cannot be detached, neutral and fair while judging his own case dates back to at least the 15th
century. This is only the first element of procedural and substantive due process that our church members and those watching in the
secular world expect to see.

The larger issue for Adventists is that our religious freedom depends as much on equal justice and due process as it does the
substantive protections of the First Amendment. Persecuting authorities through the centuries have dispensed with equal justice and
due process, because “what’s wrong is simply wrong, and only needs to be punished.” History records that the church’s
administration of its rules and policies without equal justice or due process models and gives permission to persecuting behavior on
the part of its own members that eventually turns against God’s people, their brothers and sisters.

My heart is still that of a pastor, and I continue to be active in my local Adventist congregation. People in the secular world
understand that if you belong to a church as a lay person you may or may not agree with everything it teaches or practices. Many
have this kind of relationship with their own faith communities. But, they assume that if you are an ordained minister in a particular
denomination, you must agree with and support its teachings and practices. Regrettably, in regard to social equality and basic justice,
issues that matter most to secular people and me, I do not at this time agree with nor wish to be identified with the Church’s official
positions and administrative practices.

Sincerely,

Steven Hadley

Steven R. Hadley – Curriculum Vitae abbreviated for publication

Education:
1999 California Western School of Law, San Diego, CA - Juris Doctor
1987 Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA - Master of Arts, Religion, Church History
1979 Loma Linda University, Riverside, CA  Bachelor of Arts, Ministerial Studies, Business Management minor

Experience:
2004-2010 The City Council, San Diego, CA - Chief of Staff, The Honorable Donna Frye
2003-2004 Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Riverside, CA, Administrator, Escondido Church
2001 Council Representative, The Honorable Valerie Stallings
2000 Council Representative, The Honorable Deputy Mayor Harry Mathis
1999 Office of the Public Defender, San Diego, CA, Certified Legal Intern
1994-1997 Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Scottsdale, AZ, Senior Pastor, Tucson Desert Valley Church
Elaine Nelson  
3 days ago  Reply

Very well written summation of many who hold the same values. What will be the outcome with the publication of this letter?

Bob Pickle  
3 days ago  Reply

What does Hadley mean by "gladly accepting the talent and resources of the gay community, but denying them the pastoral support and blessing we give those in heterosexual relationships"?

Does he mean blessing them while they refuse to engage in sin? Or does he mean blessing them while they engage in fornication with the same sex?

If the former, I fail to see how pastoral support and blessing has been withheld. If the latter, then it is probably a good thing that he resigned.

It matters not how long his C.V. is: If Hadley no longer believes what the Bible teaches about fornication and creation, then he isn't qualified to serve as a pastor within God's remnant church.

T. Joe & Barbara Willey  
3 days ago  Reply

Let's look back a few months ago. This current state of affairs can be traced to an apology letter released by the LSU Board. The apology letter was based on manipulation of the biology student survey which asked certain questions about how evolution theory was taught at LSU and whether or not students thought they were marginalized, even sometimes ridiculed for holding a traditional SDA creation perspective. The student answers showed a "very significant difference" by agreeing to such questions on how the professors presented "helpful ways of relating science and religious faith," that "science is unable to definitively answer questions about the ultimate origins of human life," and "evolution is presented as a scientific working theory in biology classes." Thirteen out of sixteen questions statistically showed this remarkable agreement with the student supporting the biology program and in the end 80 percent said they would recommend the biology program to their friends and others considering enrolling at LSU.

Despite this Board actually decided to stack all of the "neutral" responses in a Likert six-level questionnaire into the disagree column and by manipulating the data structures make the biology program appear to have nearly 40 percent greater "shortcomings" than what the students said. Consequently, the report from the Board concluded that the SDA view of creation was not adequately presented or supported.

The student survey report and the subsequent open apology letter drew the ire of the Board for the Adventist Accreditation Association (AAA). The Education director of the SDA world headquarters called the apology, "A Step in the right direction," even though the data structures had been manipulated to reflect a fraudulent outcome. So then the AAA Board was able to pronounced that "LSU has "deviated from the philosophy and objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist education."

Next, a meeting in the University Church where Elders Dan Jackson and Larry Blackmer attempted to soften the AAA decision to the LSU faculty.

But at least a few faculty left that meeting unhappy with what has been transpiring. One was a biologists who taught a LSU for 39 years with an outstanding following of students...and you know the rest of the story. The consequences of telling the truth about the biology student survey shows that a great deal was at stake...but you will not be hearing an apology for that difference. Apparently there are exception to ethical and moral standards.

Cheers
Kevin Riley
3 days ago
Reply

Many a researcher has proven his/her point by a judicious decision of whether neutral responses 'really' signalled agreement or disagreement with the question. Whether considering surveys or investigations, the church leaders usually know what the 'right' answer should be before beginning the process. Many people are persuaded that, when fighting the Lord's battle, the end does indeed justify the means. I think you will find many members are prepared to accept any means the church believes to be necessary in order to bring LSU back into line. I don't know why anyone who has studied church history would be surprised by any of this. Being right always has trumped being fair or just, and no doubt always will.

Bill Cork
3 days ago
Reply

I think the headline is incorrect. Steve (a classmate of mine) has, as he says in this letter, not served as a pastor for quite some time, focusing on political involvement. He did retain ministerial credentials, which in this letter he is turning in.

Elaine Nelson
3 days ago
Reply

As it is usually understood, ordination is for a lifetime, not dependent on whether one is pastoring or not as there are business administrators and such who have been ordained that never pastor a church.

Don Bowen
3 days ago
Reply

Ordination can be revoked if the conference president thinks that it is justified. It has happened in the Central California Conference. It was a very a unfair process that I witnessed first hand. It was not me but happened to someone I know very well. I was a member of the CCC Committee when the injustice was done.

Seminary Student
3 days ago
Reply

After reading the article, and the comments, interesting, he was not a Pastor in reality. Why would someone continue to be called Pastor, if he doesn't pastor a church? it doesn't make sense. Why would he continue to keep ordination credentials if he no longer represent the Adventist church, he needed to return those credentials the moment he stopped working for the church. It is also a lesson for the church, Ordination shouldn't be for life, only for those working for the church.

Elaine Nelson
2 days ago
Reply

We should applaud his actions for being honest in returning his ordination when he could no longer support the church. "Pastor" is more an honorific, and ordination is frequently given to those who never pastor a congregation.

Thoughtful
2 days ago
Reply

The title of this is certainly misleading. A more accurate title would be, "FORMER Pastor Resigns in Wake of La Sierra University Controversy."

Certainly it was the right thing to do to turn in his resignation. Perhaps he should have done this long ago. His letter makes it apparent that he should not be preaching in Adventist churches since there appears to be bitterness expressed in this letter and bitterness defiles many (Heb 12:15).

Elaine Nelson
2 days ago
Reply

Bitterness is a natural reaction of being "used" as a machine. No one appreciates or prefers to work in such an organization.
Thoughtful

It is true that "bitterness is a natural reaction of being 'used' as a machine." That is the problem. God calls us to something higher than our natural reactions.

I love Jesus and His ways, they are so different from my ways (Isa 55:8). "Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged. He lived above these difficulties, as if in the light of God's countenance. He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently. Again and again He was asked, Why do You submit to such despiteful usage, even from Your brothers?" DA 89. I, myself, have to my shame treated Him despitefully, but His forbearance has won my heart and I now want to be like Him.

If Jesus received despiteful usage from his brothers, we need not expect better from our brethren. And we have His example as to how to best reach them. It is not by being like the abuser, neither is it by becoming bitter. "He who under abuse or cruelty fails to maintain a calm and trustful spirit robs God of His right to reveal in him His own perfection of character. Lowliness of heart is the strength that gives victory to the followers of Christ; it is the token of their connection with the courts above." DA 301.3.

Seminary Student

I agree the title is very misleading. How can he resign if he is not employed by the church? It seems that this "Pastor" had quit working for the church many years ago. I would say he did the right thing, if he can not represent the church, quit and work somewhere else. I think this "Pastor" wanted to make an statement he could have returned his credentials quietly but he wants to enjoy his 15 minutes of fame. This is a non story, it does not affect anybody. Is not like if he had been Pastoring and quit.

Markham

"This is a non story, it does not affect anybody. Is not like if he had been Pastoring and quit."

Not at all newsworthy and hardly worth commenting on -- so I shall refrain from stating in more detail the obvious.

L. Humberto Covarrubias

Thank you Steven for your faithfulness to the truth "though the heavens fall". Since likewise I am not in agreement with my church's behavior in many respects and with its "official" theological interpretations, I should surrender my ordination as an elder thus expressing my inability to officially represent my church. Being a simple lay person one may enjoy more freedom and may to oneself be true.

Mark Bauer

So the ends justifies the means. This seems to be the mantra that most large religious organizations have followed throughout the ages, from the bitter wars of the crusades to the Catholic-Protestant conflicts of the middle ages. Institutional Adventism is no better at maintaining due process than any other organization trying to preserve itself at all costs and as it's first priority. Claiming we are some sort of special case because we are "the remnant" is just sheer ignorance used to justify our institutional bigotry. If we can be bullies and get away with it, we will. Kudos to Mr Hadley for being willing to call a spade a spade.

Steve Billiter

Good riddance. Kudos to this pastor who has at least the courage to resign--albeit for partially misguided reasons, in my opinion. He states, "by gladly accepting the talent and resources of the gay community, but denying them the pastoral support and "blessing" (quotes mine) we give those in heterosexual relationships."

I believe the church manual states that anyone living in unmitigated sin will be disciplined and then his/her membership privileges will be removed unless there is repentance. Certainly, a liberal pastor like himself may have baptized a known homosexual, or granted them membership (with collusion by the church board) without examining them properly according to the manual.
These persons should not be offered jobs in the church therefore qualifying a lifestyle of homosexual sin

Categorically and without compromise, God Himself all throughout the Bible condemns homosexuality, while still loving the sinner. Any pastor that holds these views is totally unfit to serve God's people as an ordained minister, or in any other capacity, period. My prayer and hope is that he, and us, will seek that loving relationship with the World's Redeemer, and truly seek to do His will. "If you love me, obey My Commandments" John 14:15.

That includes, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" Exo.20:14.

Trevor Hammond

The question still remains: “How many MORE of these ‘insurgents’ (can I call them insurgents?), are still operating within our Church who are propagating their dodgy views which distort true Biblical Belief and teachings, yet are employed at our Institutions?” Imperceptibly they seem to have infiltrated our institutions and brought in their erroneous beliefs and worldviews which they insidiously propagate in order to erode and attack our core Fundamental Belief’s. Sadly, from their positions of power, they have ‘force fed’ those who look up to them and come to learn from them, the ‘amoeba origins juice’ which is dashed with the ‘sin is not sin’ lie.

The Dr Desmond Ford ‘trojan’ was one of such attacks which came from ‘within’ and was used by opportunists to ‘hack’ into Traditional Beliefs and Structures right at the heart of our Academic Institutions and Structures of the General Conference. Dr Ford should have resigned back then when he took the off-ramp and decided that he was bigger than the SDA Church.

T

Steve Billiter

Interesting Trevor, that you should mention Desmond Ford, because I just read this referenced editorial letter (a long one) in AToday.

“My second concern is this: Jon(Paulien)faults me because I “largely discard the historicist tradition so familiar in Adventist evangelism.” He is right. I do. But he is wrong in not following suit. And again I challenge him: find for me “ANY apocalyptic scholar respected by his worldwide peers who does NOT agree with me in this. No scholar of general esteem accepts the historicist emphasis on finding dates in the prophecies (usually done in order to damn Roman Catholics). The words of Christ in Acts 1:7 forbid such exegetical historicism. Again I thank Jon for his very Christian wording in his review, and I wish him and his wife and family God’s richest blessing.” 1

Des Ford
Shelly Beach, Queensland, Australia


History is a mirror reflection of prophecy—a fundamental truth that seems to have escaped Desmond Ford. It is also another Biblical principle that light rejected means that any further light will not come to the rejecter of God’s truth unless there is decided repentance. “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day”(Proverbs 4:18; AKJV).

Any scholar that is not guided by the Holy Spirit, no matter how educated, cannot ever rightly divide the Word of truth.

There seems to be a strange twist here on Acts 1:7, where the writer above claims that the verse forbids historical exegesis. Not so. We have the 1260 year prophecy that determines the rule of power for the papacy; verified by the 42 months, and time, times, and half a time (Daniel 7:25). We also have the 2300 years of Daniel 8:14 that seemed to have upset Mr. Ford for some reason.

Acts 1:6
When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 1:7
And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power.
Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come on you: and you shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth.

Christ is clearly speaking of things future which the disciples did not need to know; recall the Jews were so concerned about the Roman rule and again making Israel the premier power in the earth. It does not mean that we are to not understand the prophecies in God’s Word now and apply time periods that are critical for proper exegesis.

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Of course Desmond Ford is well known for using rather strange Bible versions like the NIV, and others that destroy Daniel 8:14. Is it no wonder that God reveals to us that many would misinterpret time prophecies in addition to the preterist and futurist viewpoints? Not at all!

Dan 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.
NEWS

Inception of European Sunday Alliance in Brussels

20.06.2011

Brussels/Belgium 20 June 2011/APD - On 20 June 2011 the European Sunday Alliance was formed on the occasion of an expert conference on Sunday Protection at the seat of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels. The European Sunday Alliance is a network of existing national Sunday alliances, trade unions, civil society organizations and religious communities which promotes fair and balanced work conditions and the harmony of a balanced lifestyle comprising work, family and free time to strengthen social cohesion.

The alliance further requests for Sundays to be work free in the new working guidelines (2003/88/EG) to be negotiated among EU member states.

According to the alliance the ‘first European Conference on the awareness of a work free Sunday’ in the European Parliament in Brussels on 24 March 2010 was the trigger for the formation of the European Sunday Alliance. The representatives of the various organizations formulated a founding charter which stresses fair, healthy, safe and dignified working conditions as well as the right on a limitation of the maximum working hours, on a daily and weekly rest period and paid annual leave.

“A work free Sunday and appropriate working hours are a well deserved right for all citizens of Europe” states the founding charter of the alliance. All employees have the right for appropriate working hours which in principle exclude “late evenings, nights, public holidays and Sundays” from regular work.

Work on Sunday harms a healthy work life balance

According to a study by Deloitte Consulting commissioned by the European Commission non-regular working hours would harm the social rhythm which would increasingly lead to stress and illness with the employees. Non sustainable working rhythms in conjunction with minimal employment were a substantial source of the increasing phenomena of the ‘working poor’ in Europe.

“A Sunday work would harm a healthy work life balance” according to the ‘Austrian alliance for a work free Sunday’, one of the leading founding members of the European Sunday Alliance in Brussels. A work free day during the week as a compensation would not alleviate the negative effects. People who work on Sundays or during irregular hours would do this because of financial necessity and not by choice. A common weekly day of rest would provide a common focal point for the time rhythm in state and society which would strengthen the social cohesiveness in all EU member states.

Reactions to the Inception of the European Sunday Alliance

The retired roman catholic bishop of Linz and former professor bishop for social questions at the Austrian bishops conference, Maximilian Aichern, expressed his delight to the inception of the European Sunday Alliance and made the following statement through the communications department of the Linz diocese:

“A Sunday free of work is the oldest social law of the Christian-Jewish civilisation rooted in the old testament covenant (3rd of the 10 commandments). The common day of rest, the social contacts which go with it and the praising of the Lord are the most important Christian values and which are indispensible for the human dignity.”

“The fight for a work free Sunday in Europe ought to be fought on national, regional or local levels”, says Hannes Kreller, human resources expert of the catholic employee federation (KAB) in Germany. According to the KAB it is hoped, with the inception of the European Sunday Alliance, to better coordinate the activities between the various alliances as well as to increase the pressure on the EU Parliament and the EU Commission.

The Jewish community as well as the Seventh-day Adventist church, an independent evangelical church does not rest on Sunday but recognises the Saturday (Sabbath) as the biblical day of rest. When approached by APD the European Jewish Congress (EJC) had no comments yet on its assessment of the inception of the European Sunday Alliance.

Pastor Raafat Kamal, director for Public Affairs and Religious Liberty of the North European Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in St. Albans, near London, commented on the launching of the European Sunday Alliance as follows: “We support the notion that people need a day of rest to achieve a life/work-balance to maintain the health and safety of workers. This is modelled by God in the biblical creation week where he worked for six days and rested on the seventh. At the same time, we want to be sure that those who don’t have Sunday as a designated religious day of rest will be respected and tolerated. I hope that the partners in the European Sunday Alliance network who are trying to raise awareness of the value of synchronised free Sunday for European societies will appreciate the pluralistic dimensions of the European Union countries and the importance of respecting those with different religious beliefs and practices. I also trust that this advocacy campaign for protection of a work-free Sunday will not result in escalation of tension among different groups.”

By: APD Swiss
Movies and Such

Submitted Jun 29, 2011
By Cindy Tutsch

It seems to be time to change the subject. So let’s talk about something innocuous and non-controversial, like MOVIES and MEDIA!

Regarding movies, let’s agree not to discuss where or how we see them, let’s stick to “content.” Thus, we’re lumping together TV, iPad, computer, theater, or even your smartphone. (I watched a waiting parent quiet her 2 year old at the post office the other day by showing him a cartoon on her phone.)

Let me make a bias disclaimer right at the onset: I was raised without TV. Wait, that’s not quite true. My parents got a television in 1953. My mother would hold up both sides of her green felt circle-skirt to cover the cigarette ads when my bro and I were watching cartoons. We were the only faculty family at the academy where my parents were on staff who had a television. Not surprisingly, other teaching staff wanted to come over to our house and watch TV with us, especially “Dragnet.” My mom thought “Dragnet” was of the devil, so rather than have the discomfort of telling the Bible teacher she thought he was urging morally reprehensible entertainment, my folks sold the TV. I don’t think they owned a TV again until they retired!

Looking back, I’m kinda glad I wasn’t raised on a steady diet of movies, sitcoms, and commercials. I have lots of great childhood memories of dressing up my cat, playing backyard football and softball with the neighbor kids, reading books by the hour, riding bikes, talking to God while roaming my dad’s wheat fields, teaching a “pretend” school, picnicking and camping with my family and friends, playing musical instruments with my family, participating in Pathfinders, picking fresh produce from the garden, raising pet ducks, winning ribbons at the county fair, swimming and canoeing. I don’t think I could have collected those memories watching TV four to five hours a day, the national average for kids today.

But today media is far more than movies or TV. Let’s add gaming, Internet surfing, iPods and iPads, YouTube, Netflix, Hulu, Apple TV/iTunes, Amazon Instant Video, Streaming, cable TV on demand, and smartphones to the mix. Here are some of my arguments against most media entertainment:

- Media may exacerbate learning disorders and bullying behavior
- Kids can become desensitized to violence. On an average American children witness around 200,000 acts of media violence by the time they turn 18
- Media often glamorize and promote sex outside of marriage, including objectifying women or engaging in violence against women
- Media often stereotype or underrepresent non-whites
- Media alcohol advertising is powerfully attractive and creative. (If advertising doesn’t cause people to buy and use the product, why would it be a multi-billion dollar industry?)
- Kids who watch TV are more likely to smoke than kids who do not - read article
- Hours of daily media contribute to America’s increasing obesity epidemic, especially among
children. Not only does TV et al, promote a sedentary lifestyle, it also promotes junk food, another major contributor to America’s killer diseases

- Media can inhibit social development as well as hinder family bonding and communication
- Media entertainment is saturated with profanity
- Commercials promote materialism through aggressive marketing of toys to even the youngest of children
- Some research indicates that there is a negative correlation between media exposure and children’s academic achievement and creativity. There may even be a direct correlation between time spent absorbed in media and personality disorders.

What concerns me most, however, is the detrimental effects of media on our spirituality, whatever our age. Perhaps this is most critical for children because some research suggest media can have adverse effects on the development of the left frontal lobe of the brain, the area that controls moral judgment and self-control.

In my last blog, many of us hypothesized about who would be pivotal in initiating loss of religious freedom in the United States. Perhaps a more important question would be, “Seeing all these things are about to occur, how then should we live today?”

Scripture gives us some instructive principles for media choices. Three of my favorites are:

1. Philippians 4:8 Whatever is good and worthwhile, think on these things
2. Psalm 101:3 I won’t watch anything worthless, lewd, vile or vulgar
3. Isaiah 33:16 Those whose bread and water will be assured [in the last days?] are those who refrain now from watching violence or evil

Though not all media is negative, its typical messages of violence, vulgarity, exploitive sexuality and consumerism are in direct contrast to biblical Christianity. Someone once remarked, “All television is educational television. The question is, what is it teaching?” With that question in mind, maybe I should conclude with three cheers for the HOPE Channel. View in moderation, of course, with no Twinkies during the commercials!

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**Cindy Tutsch**

I strongly encourage y'all to click on the embedded link -- the one about in the middle of my blog that says "read article." There are more resources on kids and TV in this University of Michigan article than I have ever before seen in one place!

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**John Andrews**

Like everything in life, balance is key. EGW would very likely simply advocate balance on this issue, very different from the hardliners ellenwhiteans in our midst.
How nice of you to speak for the prophet John, nothing could be farther from the truth. Reading her writings is the best way to know what The Holy Spirit says about entertainment theatrics.

There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use. The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement. {AH 516.2}

The world is teeming with errors and fables. Novelties in the form of sensational dramas are continually arising to engross the mind; and absurd theories abound which are destructive to moral and spiritual advancement. The cause of God needs men of intellect, men of thought, men well versed in the Scriptures, to meet the inflowing tide of opposition. We should give no sanction to arrogance, narrow-mindedness, and inconsistencies, although the garment of professed piety may be thrown over them. Those who have the sanctifying power of the truth upon their hearts will exert a persuasive influence. Knowing that the advocates of error cannot create or destroy truth, they can afford to be considerate and calm. {GW92 170.1}

Many of the prophecies are about to be fulfilled in quick succession. Every element of power is about to be set to work. Past history will be repeated, old controversies will arouse to new life, and peril will beset God’s people on every side. Intensity is taking possession of the human family. It is permeating everything upon the earth. And for what? Games, plays, amusements; people are rushing and crowding and contending for the mastery. That which is common and perishable is absorbing their attention, so that things of eternal interest are scarcely thought of. {CTr 313.5}

... those who were absorbed in their plays and frivolous amusements, would the solemn melody of His voice be heard in benediction, saying, "Peace be to this house"? How would the Saviour of the world enjoy these scenes of gaiety and folly? {Con 64.3}

Plays, horse races, and amusements of every kind occupy the mind. In the church, sins have become fashionable. (LHU 371).

The religion of the Bible is not detrimental to the health of the body or of the mind. The influence of the Spirit of God is the very best medicine that can be received by a sick man or woman. Heaven is all health, and the more deeply the heavenly influences are realized, the more sure will be the recovery of the believing invalid. At some Health Institutions, amusements, plays, and dancing, are recommended by the physicians to get up an excitement, to keep the patients from becoming gloomy, while they express many fears for the result of religious interest. Their theory in this respect is not only erroneous, but dangerous. Yet they talk this in such a manner that patients would be led to think that their recovery depended upon their having as few thoughts of God and Heaven as possible. {HR, October 1, 1872 par. 7}

Satan's work is to lead men to ignore God, to so engross and absorb the mind that God will not be in their thoughts. The education they have received has been of a character to confuse the mind and eclipse the true light. Satan does not wish the people to have a knowledge of God; and if he can set in operation games and theatrical performances that will so confuse the senses of the young that human beings will perish in darkness while light...
shines all about them, he is well pleased. {AH 401.6}

Elaine Nelson        4 days ago  Reply
Confusing children watching certain TV programs with adults muddies the subject. Children are not little adults and there are many things for which they should not be exposed, and than includes much that is on TV as well as movies.

This is why there is a PG rating for movies and gives parents the option to take their children or not. Movies, like many novels, portray moral lessons that often are better understood than straight instruction.

My 11-yr. old granddaughter has been raised with no TV in the home, and it is used, rarely, for movies which her parents select. It has never been a "baby-sitter" and only when she visits grandma does she watch the Disney Channel to relax after a school year and is on R&R. (What happens at Grandma's stays at grandma's.) We infrequently take her to movies that or chosen to be innocuous, and never the violence or sexual themes so pervasive today.

The Adventism which I grew up in, and many others, movies were of the devil, and one was always afraid her name would be called up and she would be in a movie which immediately damned her to hell. Today, I can comfortably watch many of the old classics which I missed during those years and find them, strangely, not at all the evil I was warned against. The problem: ALL movies were banned and we were not taught to choose either movies, TV, novels (fiction was of the devil) or classic literature that develops both mind and moral conscience. Moderation in all things is still a good motto to follow.

Hawaii50ish        3 days ago  Reply
I totally agree with your last paragraph. It was very unfortunate that the SDA church/community where I grew up made it all about "association," as if by some sort of osmotic reaction we would become like all those heathens in the theater. Of course we could see the same movie 10 years after release (except in extremely rare cases like "The Sound of Music") as a fundraiser for the academy or a Saturday evening entertainment in the gym, and that was just fine. I believe the arguments set forth for our young inquiring minds in those days just didn't hold water. Kids aren't stupid, and they can see through arguments that don't make sense such as the movie argument or the jewelry/wedding ring argument. Perhaps with the ready availability of movies and TV in all mediums now, the arguments regarding content have improved.

William Noel        4 days ago  Reply
Cindy,

Don't faint. I agree. Making positive choices about what we allow into our minds is a great and continual challenge. Since we cannot avoid the messages surrounding us, how about if we put some creativity into displacing some of the negative messages with positive, morals-based stories that will be attractive to those who are not spiritually-minded?
Cindy Tutsch

William

With my trusty smelling salts, I have recovered . . .

And I also agree! . . . with your important suggestion to not leave the house of the mind empty. That's why I edit visionary4kids.org (just a little veggie commercial here) and promote student literature evangelists who distribute Jerry Thomas's kids books and even some Arthur Maxwell stories.

But I also subscribe to the theory that even though some are not spiritually-minded, there is a God-vacuum in that mind house. It is possible for carefully selected Christian literature to be an agency to lead some to the Water of Life, helping them recognize and fill their real heart-cry.

William Noel

Cindy,

The "God vacuum." I like that description. The greater problem I see there is not the presence of that vacuum, but that most Christians have been given a limited model for how to introduce spiritual principles to people who obviously do not believe the same as they do and insist on inundating them with what fails to fill their vacuum.

Seeing the general ineffectiveness of our church's familiar methods for introducing people to God, I think we need to reevaluate everything we do. Good as they were, I'm glad there is an effort under way to replace the Uncle Arthur books with collections of stories that are more relevant to today's society. Hopefully they'll be available to you soon.

Ella M Rydzewski

I totally agree with your blog, Cindy. I wasn't raised in the church, but we had TV when it seemed innocent by today's standards. But before we got one, the public school I attended would show movies once a month. When I saw my first movie (about age 6), I was horrified and had to hide my eyes because of the mild violence. Another one was on the last days of Pompeii--after that I refused to attend the movies and stayed with a Pentacostal girl in the classroom while the others went to the movies. Then when we got TV, I became desensitized to the violence. I can imagine what this really evil stuff is doing to kids today. I still don't like violent films or explicit ones, and when I went to movies in my younger days if the film was too bad, I got up and waited in the lobby for whomever I was with until they came out.

There are Christian media reviewers that can be found on-line, however, if one is so inclined to attend a movie or watch one at home. There are a few good ones out there that are worth the time. I do admit to getting hooked in to some TV programs at times that aren't worth the time!
I thought I was the only one who had noticed the words in a dialogue from "Superman Returns" when I watched it some time ago and since then have mentioned it to others as well. I checked up on it when I saw this pertinent blog and found that the words from this dialogue were noted already and documented. What a tragic 'subliminal message'?

Here are the words from the movie:

-->Superman: I read the article, Lois.
-->Lois Lane: Yeah, so did a lot of people. Tomorrow night, they're giving me the Pulitzer...
-->Superman: Why did you write it?
-->Lois Lane: How could you leave us like that? I moved on. So did the rest of us. That's why I wrote it. THE WORLD DOESN'T NEED A SAVIOUR. AND NEITHER DO I.

[Scene from Superman Returns – 2006]

Could this line "The world doesn't need a saviour. And neither do I," be just coincidence? Or was it 'put in' intentionally? Whatever reason, it speaks volumes. A sinful, debased, dying world - NO SAVIOUR? Just one line = one sermon - whether intentional or not - a 'blockbuster' for satan - nonetheless...

I found the following 'scary' info on a website:
http://www.icr.org/article/know-enemy-a-critique-anton-laveys-books-satanism/

"There are television sets in every home, every restaurant, every hotel room, and every shopping mall—now they're even small enough to carry in your pocket like electronic rosaries. It is an unquestioned part of everyday life. Kneeling before the cathode-ray god, with our TV Guide concordance in hand, we maintain the illusion of choice by flipping channels (chapters and verses)."

The writer was the man who founded the most famous public Satanist organization in America (the Church of Satan founded in 1966), Anton LaVey. He is also the author of a number of other books including "The Satanic Bible."

He also says: "... The birth of TV was a magical event foreshadowing its satanic significance. The first commercial broadcast was aired on Walpurgisnacht, April 30th, 1939, at the New York World's Fair. Since then, TV's infiltration has been so gradual, so complete that no one even noticed. People don't need to go to church any more; they get their morality plays on television."

1 Anton LaVey, The Devil's Notebook (Portland, Oregon, Feral House, 1992), p.84.
2 Ibid. p. 86.

So yeah, maybe some factions within the Church should stop blaming traditional Adventism for the loss of young people and accept the fact that Hollywood ain't Holywood. TV has a detrimental influence on both kids and adults who are somewhat 'addicted' to the 'tube'. This 'one eyed monster' (as a christian brother in my hometown puts it), is truly a dangerous medium if/when used incorrectly or the wrong purposes.

Say What? 4 to 5 hours a day? Kids Watching? That's soo BAD - soo SAD! I know this may sound extreme but I think tv is most definitely one of the 'channels' that Satan is using to further his sicko
debased social disorder through filth, immorality, profanity, blasphemy, violence, violence and more violence, etc., in open defiance to God Almighty and His Son Jesus Christ. It not only desensitizes us from violence but also the broader results of sin and wickedness. At least this is one EVIL they can't pin on the 'third world' for instigating. Huh!

In the only true MEDIAtor - Jesus Christ!

T

Steve Billiter

From your linked article, "Shows with a prosocial message can have a positive effect on kids' behavior; programs with positive role models can influence viewers to make positive lifestyle changes."

How's that? I did not see 3abn mentioned, or any other "show" that teaches Bible principles. Alternatively, I'm not aware of any TV shows or movies that really teach children good moral values. Even the witchcraft of Harry Potter claims to be "goodness."

The rapidly moving images of entertainment TV puts the brain in alpha mode in 17 seconds. This is a form of mesmerism akin (or can lead to) to Nuero Linguistic Programming which prepares the mind to accept what is presented. Satan's agenda is transmitted through all Hollywood productions as well as with many or most independent film producers. Additionally, whether it is a Christmas play in the church (BTW, Ellen White was not exactly having fun when she attended her granddaughters play)or any theatrical production, the Spirit of Prophecy condemns all such activities, whether it's a misguided attempt to teach the gospel through the drama or play, or watching entertainment productions, comedy's, or other paraphernalia. These things all war against the spirituality that we need in Christ Jesus.

Within Adventism; Ellen White, Battlefield Hollywood,(Little Light Studios) Dr. Neil Nedley of Wiemar Center, and Joe Crews book, "Creeping Compromise," the "The TV Trap," chapter, and Steve Wohlberg; all utilize Biblical principles while exposing the entertainment industry.

Elaine,

If we use ourselves and our own wisdom to try and ascertain if movies are "evil" we will be sure to fail. In heaven before the fall of man, Lucifer bent his master mind in deception so powerful that his tale (lies) deceived one third of the angels in heaven. Part of his story was that holy angels were sufficiently wise to govern themselves, and needed no governing or law by God to guide them.

Before Adam and Eve had a chance to grow in the knowledge and love of God, they too fell being taken in a snare by Satan. Since then, man has had to depend wholly upon the merits of Christ and His Word to guide his way back to that perfect garden, and that perfect Holy existence without pain, suffering and eventual death. I wish, but I cannot have back, the hours and hours, days and days, years and years, spent wasted in front of a TV or movie screen when I could have been studying to get to that paradise that is coming soon--and to help others get there.

Happily, I returned to the LORD instead of following the road to eternal death. So now I need that
Guide, the Bible and the SOP to finish guiding me home in these last, very dangerous days. Worldliness is spiritual death to the soul, and only in the light of the 1000 years judgment will the risen saints know the power of TV dramas, comedy’s and theatricals, and their significant part in the eternal destruction of those for whom Christ died.

(1John 2:15 [AKJV])
Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

(1John 2:16)
For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

(1John 2:17)
And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God stays for ever.

(Rom 1:28)
And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

(Rom 1:29)
Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

(Rom 1:30)
Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

(Rom 1:31)
Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

(Rom 1:32 [AKJV])
Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but **have pleasure in them that do them.**

Sin is viewed on TV and movies, and elsewhere, and as the non-participant feels "neutral" and not involved--yet he/she takes pleasure in these sins vicariously. What does the Bible say they are worthy of? Strong language sometimes is needed to get the attention of some. With most, nothing works.

Elaine Nelson

Surely, all movies and TV are not evil. Adventists use TV to send sermons and other events. Movies are neither evil or good but depend on the content. We have only our own conscience and God-given reason to make decisions. Adults may safely read books, see movies, and TV that are not appropriate for children unless one is content on "dumbing down" all his material that are
approved for children.

Education in the home is where children should be taught discrimination in everything: food, entertainment, and more. To say all such is "out of bounds" is to turn children loose to face such decisions when they leave home, without any guidance or discernment.

"Hold on to your own belief, as between yourself and God--and consider the man fortunate who can make his decision without going against his conscience" (Rom. 14:22).

Steve Billiter

Elaine,

Your Bible text is used out of context and does not reflect either good exegesis, nor does it follow Paul's meaning. The context shows that Paul is speaking of not causing one’s brother to stumble and to keep his faith to himself. Trying to use this verse to justify theatrics which the apostles and Jesus never used is incorrect. One may correctly teach their children the joys of following Scripture instead of the world and certainly does not include "discrimination in entertainment," which to me means, if there are 10 degrees of evil programming, do I accept the 4 or the 7? All entertainment TV has degrees of evil that war against Christ. Either we teach our children good Biblical values, or we let Satan do it through his mediums.

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

It's more correct to perhaps say, "I will do as I will regardless of the Word of God and the SOP guides me to do." That's what I would say in any context should I decide to follow the worlds agenda apart from Christ.

Let's get some context here, and following is an excerpt from the Commentary with which I agree.

Rom 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another (AKJV, same as the KJV).
Rom 14:20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eats with offense.
Rom 14:21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak.
Rom 14:22 Have you faith? have it to yourself before God. Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows.
Rom 14:23 And he that doubts is damned if he eat, because he eats not of faith: for whatever is not of faith is sin.

From The 7th Day Adventist Commentary:

22. Hast thou faith? Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading, "The faith that you have." The pronoun "you" is emphatic in the Greek. “Faith” in this context is the faith to "eat all things" (v. 2).

Have it to thyself. Such faith is not to be paraded openly to the offense of the “weak” (v. 1) brother, but is to be kept between yourself and God.
Happy. Gr. makarios (see on Matt. 5:3). This happiness is the blessedness of a clear and undoubting conscience.

Alloweth. Gr. dokimazō (see on ch. 12:2).


Is damned. Gr. katakrinō, “to condemn.” The man who eats, in spite of the doubts of his conscience, is condemned.

Faith. Here referring to a conviction of right and wrong, resulting in the determination to do whatever is believed to be God’s will. Paul’s meaning is that if a Christian does not act from strong personal conviction that what he does is right, but, instead, complies weakly with the judgment of others, then his action is sinful. The Christian should never violate his conscience. It may require educating. It may tell him that certain things are wrong that in themselves may not be wrong. But until convinced by the Word and the Spirit of God that a certain course is proper for him, he ought not to pursue it. He must not make others the criterion for his conduct; he must go to the Scriptures and learn for himself his duty in the matter (see 2T 119–124).

Who was speaking of sermons and such good teachings? I was not at all writing on that context; mine was purely on entertainment “fiction” based productions which do include items like "The Ten Commandments;" with Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner. Cindy's articles does mention the Hope Channel as a good alternative.

For me, entertainment is a dangerous word; one that is very problematic indeed. I know Adventists who show up in church on Sabbath, warm the pew, and virtually never crack a Bible open. Their conversation is of the world, almost never on Biblical topics and that related to Sabbath conversation. Entertainment TV and movies as well as the fiction novels, cause undue excitement and can lead to a condition called anhedonia; the inability to experience pleasure and joy.

"Anhedonia: Loss of the capacity to experience pleasure. The inability to gain pleasure from normally pleasurable experiences. Anhedonia is a core clinical feature of depression, schizophrenia, and some other mental illnesses."

An anhedonic mother finds no joy from playing with her baby. An anhedonic football fan is not excited when his team wins. An anhedonic teenager feels no pleasure from passing the driving test."


Fictional productions whether, books, movies, TV, plays operas, can most definitely lead to a diseased imagination.

"That which many term experience is not experience at all; it has resulted from mere habit, or from a course of indulgence, thoughtlessly and often ignorantly followed. There has not been a fair trial by actual experiment and thorough investigation, with a knowledge of the principles involved in the action. Experience which is opposed to natural law,—which is in conflict with the unchangeable principles of nature,—is not to be relied upon. Superstition arising from a diseased imagination is often arrayed in opposition to reason and to scientific principles. To many a person, the idea that others may gainsay what he has learned by experience, seems folly, and even cruelty itself. But there are more errors received and held through false ideas of experience than from any other cause. There are many invalids today who will ever remain such because they cannot be convinced
that their experience is not to be relied upon." {CTBH 109.2}

This should need to explanation--how rampant in Adventism are beliefs based upon experiences that conflict with God's word? If it looks good, sounds good, tastes good, then it is good.

Excess entertainment is certainly sin, the Bible and the SOP are clear! I totally regret letting my children watch TV, and I really believed that I was doing "good" by keeping them away from Sabbath cartoons and those extremely "evil" TV shows, movies and Nintendo games. I realize now how wrong that I was. The TV should have been designated for the dumpster unless it was used for sermons, some limited news, or good childrens' Bible stories (3abn). Hollywood movies or anything of that nature should have been never viewed along with all sports productions.
What does Sin have to do with Righteousness?

Submitted Jun 28, 2011
By Herb Douglass

We all have been enriched by participants in the last blog discussion on “Righteousness by Faithfulness.” However, it seems to me that, like ships passing in the night, we are talking right past by each other — working from different paradigms, different world views, and different word definitions.

All I can do is to be more helpful in defining where I am coming from, always hoping to be massaged by the best thoughts of others. First, what is sin? Later, what is NT faith?

Really, at the heart of all philosophy, as well as all theology since Plato, is the problem of sin. In connecting the dots in anyone’s theology, the first dot is that person’s definition of sin. Depending on “that dot,” all other theological topics or dots are directly affected or conditioned! Of course, some will say, and I agree, that the “first” dot is “freedom over against divine fiat.” In discussing sin in this blog, I am assuming all are agreed that freedom is God’s greatest gift to His created intelligences, even before love!

One of the ways we can set the table is to ask: Is sin something we are born with? Or is sin something we choose?

I surely haven’t read every scholar since Plato but I have read enough to know that we should be very careful whom we trust, past or present, in building our personal convictions. In my own lifetime, for example, I have watched and studied the two titans of the early 20th century — Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. These two Protestant thinkers embodied the tension of the centuries on this subject.

Barth was magnificent (and so noted) in his assault on “modern” theology. Brunner even more so! But Barth was emphatic, contending that every part of man’s nature is infected by the contagion of sin, that man has no capacity to reach out for divine help. Brunner fired back that freedom is the issue, that man has “addressability,” a “capacity for revelation” that enables man to apprehend and respond to the gospel. Barth responded that the Holy Spirit must create that capacity. The old struggle of freedom.

I find it much safer to listen to Jesus and Paul and other biblical writers, without feeling indebted to the stream of philosophers and theologians who have built their views on the convictions of those who preceded them, even though some used biblical verses in interesting ways to support their world view.

Jesus said on at least two occasions: “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you see, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:41, NKJV). “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin” (John 15:22, NKJV).

James wrote: “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17, NKJV). This leads me to conclude that any deviation from the known will of God, with special emphasis on “known,” is sin according to Jesus and James.

We remember the April 21, 1997 issue of U.S. News & World Report that ran a cover story featuring a little child under the story title: “Born Bad?” It summarized the growing questions that people are
asking: what plays the most destructive role in determining human conduct: destiny or choice — nature or nurture?

Of course, I say both! But that calls for definitions again. We are all born with a history imbedded in our genetic stream. Look at the blood line that Jesus was born into! Alcoholic parents often imbed the tendency to drink alcohol, fretful Moms pass on certain weaknesses to their children, etc. All that is how nature certainly affects the transmission of parental weaknesses that are deposited into their children at birth. Too much research to deny this.

Nurture is how the child accepts or corrects these inbred dispositions, tendencies and inclinations. But how? God foresaw all this and that is why He helps to level the playing field. Every child born into this world, regardless of country, has a Forever Partner — the Holy Spirit that “gives light to every man [person] coming into the world” (John 1:9, NKJV). See Romans 2:13-15 where Paul argues boldly that everyone will be judged by a fair God; those who have been blessed with a clear picture of God and His salvation and those who do not know of God’s Plan through preaching, BUT “who show the work of the law in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them,” He is describing a lot of people in this world through the centuries “who do not have the law, by nature, do the things in the law, are a law to themselves.”

God has been there from our earliest years, contending with the tricks and temptations that Satan is so good at. Sin happens when we do not resist evil in whatever form.

Seems like this is what James is saying: “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (James 1: 13-15, NIV).

Temptation is not sin. Temptation comes to the best of men and women. Always will until Jesus comes. So many people are suffocating under this cloud, thinking that their temptations, whether from without or within, is sin. Our minds are the playground where the Great Controversy is played out every day and night. We have the promise and examples that when Satan is resisted by the shared power of the Holy Spirit, he will flee (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8, 9). Yes, he will come back again and again until we and the Holy Spirit have built up enough neural pathways called habits that become as solid as when we learned to tie our shoes or to typewrite. That’s what the Bible means by “overcoming.”

I must not leave this blog until we figure out where this notion of “original sin” fits in. Remember, the phrase is not biblical. It is a notion that comes down through Grecian philosophy and into the Christian church with gusto through Augustine, through the Catholic stream, and some of the Reformers could not shake everything off at once when they left the predominant church.

Of course there is an “original sin.” Lucifer committed it. On earth, Adam and Eve committed earth’s “original sin.” But those poor choices did not do something to the human race in such a way that sin automatically was endemic in human sperm and ova. The parental habits did! Those habits infect that genetic blood stream as the moral and physical weaknesses of parents move from one generation to the next.

We were born greatly weakened by family choices but Ezekiel (among others) teaches that, regardless of parental habits and weaknesses, the son or daughter “who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise…he shall not die for the iniquity of his
father, he shall surely live!” (Ezekiel 18:14-17, NKJV). (The whole chapter is as relevant as today’s sunshine.)

In summary for now, sin is neither necessary nor inevitable. Sin must have one’s consent that opens the neural pathway that leads to cherishing it and then to its fulfillment. And the power of the Spirit, working with us from babyhood, is constantly nudging our conscience (as Paul calls it). The home environment, the parental examples, all this the Holy Spirit can also nourish to give the child a leg up in the Great Controversy — that no one can avoid. We are all players, not spectators.

Elaine Nelson

“If you were blind, you would have no sin."

Should this be interpreted as one who is "blind" to sin? Sin is a very movable and selective connotation depending on the culture, the time, and an individual. Unless sin can be more succinctly defined, of what us to describe penalties?

When did the idea of "original sin" become a prominent Christian doctrine? Augustine is often credited with initiating that term. The commandment warns that one sins may extend to the third and fourth generation. Does that mean we are responsible for their sins? Do we inherit sin the same as genetic traits? The gene pool demonstrates that humans benefit from diversity, and it is well recognized that inbreeding causes many conditions that are detrimental to offspring. This was surely the practice for many centuries as siblings cohabited, and likely uncles with cousins, and more.

Without benefit of the church to define sin (and there have been thousands of definitions, beginning with the 600+ laws in Judaism that could be broken. If sin is separation from God, one must have a particular idea of God from which to be separated. Who has the perfect picture of God? Some see God as arbitrary and condemning. Others as a god of love. Doesn't everything depend on one's idea of God?

Tracy Calvert

Thank you, Herb, for your blog posting. I have a few questions and comments. In reading your article, it almost sounds like you are advocating a doctrine of perfectionism, particularly in the last paragraph, and when talking about habits and neural pathways. It sounds as though we should be able work our way to a perfect state, free from all sinning. Am I reading correctly? Do you believe sanctification is ever 100% in this lifetime? My last question is, is there a difference between sin and sinning/sins? It's always been my understanding and have heard this within the church many times, that we are born sinful and there's nothing we can do about that because of choices our parents, Adam and Eve, made thousands of years ago. Weren't we separated from God at Eden, and isn't this sin. Sinning is about the choices we make. Maybe I'm reading wrong what you've written, or maybe I'm just way out in left field.

William Noel

Tracy,

Good question! Yes, there is a difference between sin and sins. Sin is what is in us, what changed the nature of our entire world and causes us to behave in ways that are contrary to the essential
character that God originally implanted in us.

It is helpful to think of it with a medical metaphor. Sin is the disease in us and sins are the symptoms like headache, nausea, pain and fever. Those symptoms may causes you to go to the doctor, who diagnoses the disease and prescribes treatment. Part of that treatment is to relieve the symptoms, but the greater objective is to resolve the cause with a long-term course of treatment.

Our sins (the symptoms caused by sin) make us aware of our need for redemption. God begins by forgiving us (relieving the symptoms) while inviting us into a closer, long-term relationship with Him so we will allow Him to transform us. The visible result of this is changing our behavior (less sinning). God is able to do this because our focus has moved from changing the symptoms to curing the disease.

Will you get well if you focus only on modifying your symptoms? Will taking aspirin to relieve pain cure the cancer causing the pain?

Yes, God's ultimate objective is perfection in us. His immediate objective is demonstrating His power to forgive and change us now. The choice facing us is: Will we remain focused on just the symptoms? Or, will we seek the cure?

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Elaine Nelson  5 days ago  Reply

Tracy, you seem to be implying that the old but important cliche when writing on any subject is: First define your terms.

This is never more appropriate than when writing of such monumental subjects. Until we can properly define sin, righteousness has no meaning. So, please, Herb, could you give us your definition of these two words?

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Glenn Hansen  5 days ago  Reply

Herb, The passage in James indicates that a specific situation is being described. The people were making plans about doing business, traveling, and so forth, as if life would go on forever. James said that they should be willing to submit themselves to God's will and preface their declarations with "God willing" as in "God willing, we will go to Macedonia next month and open a fruit selling stand." To not recognize the temporary and uncertain nature of our existence is a sin.

I don't believe that this passage can legitamately be used to "prove" that all sin is a choice.

Romans 7 is quite clear, specifically, addressing the issue of sin, that sin is not a choice, that people are not free to choose, that we are indeed slaves to sin working in our members which conflicts with the good we know we should do.

I'm not sure where you get this stuff from but It's difficult for me to believe that it is coming from the Bible.
Elaine Nelson 5 days ago Reply

"any deviation from the known will of God, with special emphasis on “known,” is sin according to Jesus and James."

Again, before being "known" someone must be taught, and there have been many things taught as sin that were not, necessarily sins. Need more be said in Adventism there were almost as many as Judaism: eating meat, "working" on Sabbath, even coveting—which would remove all ambition to better ourselves in most any way.

Bill Garber 5 days ago Reply

Herb, friend ...

How can one become a former sinner by not sinning, even for a moment? A felon is always a felon, no? The scripture declares the penalty for sin is death. 'I only robbed one person!' cannot justify one robbery. And whether it was choice or inheritance, the scripture affirms that we have all sinned and therefore are sinners and therefore will to dust return. Nothing we will every do, can ever do today or tomorrow can void our state as sinner. This is why there is no conflict between faith or works as a means of salvation. Neither can contribute whatsoever to our salvation. Both are of ourselves, and our salvation is not of ourselves.

The reason our righteousness is termed 'filthy rags' is about not robbing a thousand or ten thousand cannot make sweet the putridness of one robbery, indeed claiming such cover soils such otherwise righteous actions before they are brought in contact with the wound of our sin.

Now, if you articulate the prospect of fulfilling the law by loving one another in truth and reality, no matter our nature or nurture, in those moments we sense our having been embraced by God's loving grace, indeed, indeed! As the scripture notes, such love by God constrains us ... and in wonderful and inescapable ways!

To what end such constraint?

That the world may marvel in our love one for another, I'm thinking.

And the reason we love anyone is that we see our selves in the other. We love one another because we see no difference between us and any human, every human. We see others as we sense God's gracious gaze on us, aspiring to be chief of sinners should Paul relinquish that self-appointed position.

What comes to me from this is that while we can come to prefer love over desperation prior to our salvation in actuality from our dusty destination, that salvation in no way is conditional on the timing of such realization, today, tomorrow, yesterday, or post judgment.

We will all come to see clearly, and we all see through a glass darkly in this life. Perhaps that clarity is made true when the books are opened and we see ourselves as God has always seen us. And if such a sight is then for the first time, it will be soon enough, as that is the moment that the Righteousness of Jesus swaths us by His grace, grace we can only imagine by faith today.

And what imagination your bring to your vision, friend!
Ella M Rydzewski

Herb,
I like your blog, especially the following: "Every child born into this world, regardless of country, has a Forever Partner — the Holy Spirit that “gives light to every man [person] coming into the world” (John 1:9, NKJV). See Romans 2:13-15 where Paul argues boldly that everyone will be judged by a fair God;..."

I know that God is fair/just. Given that strong belief, I am free to go on to other questions that have puzzled me over the years in my interactions with different Christian people. I would appreciate your opinion. Much of this has to do with emotional or mental issues that are physiologically caused from ADHD to depression, anxiety, and worse. These illnesses were once blamed on the individual as if it were a choice (similar to homosexual orientation today??) Christians suffer these things about as much as nonChristians. (I think they can deal them better.) So this puts the definition of "sin" as rather nebulous.

Sin in the Bible seems to always be associated with extreme behaviors in action or thought rather than day-to-day mistakes or habits. It appears as if a person on medication "sins" less than one without it. We know the fruits of the Holy Spirit, yet certain medications can make it easier for the ill person to exhibit them. As a medical friend once said years ago to the idea of some mental illnesses as demon-possession, "the demons certainly respond to lithium."

Going back to Rom. 7, I think this is a struggle for all of God's people and not just unbelievers. Concerning your last paragraph that infers "perfection," I think that biblical perfection is that of love. It is not being concerned about every tiny aspect of our lives about whether it is sin or not. Anyone reaching the biblical perfection of love wouldn't know it. But aren't we all perfect in Christ?

Original sin?? Whatever you call it, we are born selfish, and this is the corruptible nature that haunts us in degrees all our lives and what sanctification is about. Yet we have been reconciled to God, saved by Jesus "from the foundation of the world" until and unless we reject the Holy Spirit given to all as you have so well-stated.

I think the neural pathways are not really chosen or we are too young or vulnerable when they are chosen. They can be part of nature or nature. I know it is said we can overcome all learned and inherited "evil," yet so few do or seem able even though they pray and pray and try and try. Like illness it seems rarely cured, yet they are not abandoned by God, and if they do not abandon Him, they are saved through His grace.

Elaine Nelson

We can no more "overcome" all learned and inherited "evil" (define inherited evil?) than we can "overcome" our genetic inheritance from our parents. We should appreciate the good genes and traits we received from them and only endeavor to control such as we are able to. But we cannot control all, nor should we attempt to do so, any more than we can control our physical features that we also inherit. Just as a baby, developing normally, is "perfect" at the various stages of growth, just so we can be "perfect" in our progress of overcoming but never will either a baby or an adult be perfect in the sense of absolute perfection--that is God's characteristic alone.
Ella M Rydzewski

Some rational points here, except for the following: "But we cannot control all, nor should we attempt to do so, any more than we can control our physical features that we also inherit.

If born with a disability, deformity, or illness that can be improved or healed, of course, we have surgery or medication to remedy it. General physical features aren't destructive, so there is no reason to change those. Habits can be very destructive and do need struggle to overcome or cure, and prayer is one of them. I agree about being perfect on every level of growth as you said--it was said by EGW as well.

Evil is a much-overused word (a different definition at varying times of history) and quite extreme in our modern terminology meaning something like demonic. It could also mean anything that is destructive on any level. Therefore, inherited would be something like a tendency toward alcoholism. And anyone believing the church should cancel its stand on alcohol is not considering the large percentage in this category (a selfish idea). We might wonder how many more alcoholics we would have if this standard wasn't in place.

Trevor Hammond

How would this bible verse below, from one who was also quite accustomed to both sin AND righteousness, impact on a topic like this?

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[Psalm 51:5] Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

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In the SINLESS Saviour - Jesus Christ!

T

Seminary Student

I think we need to study the effects of Adam's sin on the human race. If we read the bible we will see that after Adam's sin, all human beings have been born under sin that is "unconverted". Sin is more than choice, Ellen White understood this in Steps to Christ page 18 "It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Job 14:4; Romans 8:7. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness".

L. Humberto Covarrubias

We are born sinful; our mortality is the essence of sinfulness in our physical lives and we "must be
born again" this time of heavenly Parents so that in our lives the image of God would be restored. As far as our physical mortality, we'll have to wait till the "glorious morn". But God is so good that He has defended our intellectual freedom and in this sense we don't have to wait. It is called imprinting in the nonintellectual animal kingdom, identification in the human realm. Yes Elaine, covetousness is selfish, egocentric, not in the image of God; but admiration and worship are positive, godly traits. The more we know Him, the more we will admire Him, the more we will identify with Him, the more like Him we will be, we will be righted, justified, sanctified, glorified, etc. Simply put sin is ascribing the wrong character to God. Isn't that what the Great Controversy is all about?

Herbert Douglass

I am glad for the mental energy you folk put into your comments. A quick response to two items: When anyone chooses to use Psalm 51:5 ("in sin my mother conceived me") to prove we are all born sinful, I must ask whether David's Mom was a prostitute. But I immediately turn to Ps 71:5,6: "You are my trust from my youth, By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb" or Ps 22:9--"But You are He who took me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breast. I was cast upon You from birth, From my mother's womb." This particular question always helps me to avoid making theological statements from David's songs.

Character of God: Yes, above all else, the core issue in understanding the Great Controversy is the character of God. The core question is, "Can God be trusted?" Such was the issue when Satan accosted Eve in the Garden. And it has been the central concern on any subject that troubles many thinking men and women today. John the Revelator forecasts how this core question turns out: "Just and true are Your works" (Rev 15:3; "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments" (Rev 16:7; see also 19:2).

Herbert Douglass

Regarding whether we were born sinful or become sinful by choice, it seems that some are falling back unconsciously on assumptions that have been passed on for hundreds of years. Where does the notion come from that we are all born sinful? Historically, we can trace that notion back through one theologian after another but never to the Bible. As I wrote earlier, James 1:13-15; 4:17 and John 15:22-24 and John 9:41 say otherwise. Personally, no theologian takes priority over Jesus and James.

Obviously, we have all sinned for several reasons. We are sinners! But by choice and for all that we must take responsibility. That word is a key word in the Great Controversy, or else why do we talk so glibly about the judgments of God? Take away one element in our theological picture, and many other issues are immediately affected. That's the fundamental issue in trying to understand how to make rational sense out of Christ's messages to us. Try it and see how all other doctrines are directly affected by misunderstanding the core understanding of sin.

In discussing this subject in a classroom, it doesn't take long for the students to see that understanding "sin" directly affects one's sense of responsibility. No one will be condemned for being a sinner but will be if light is rejected (John 3:18-21). That may be underneath the thinking that says Jesus was not born with the same human weaknesses that we have because that would mean He would automatically be a sinner! Or if Jesus truly was born with the same human
weaknesses/tendencies, etc, then none of us would have any excuses. But that is another subject.

Cheers, Herb

laffal 14 hours ago Reply

Herb,

Am I to understand that by not being sinful you mean, that I was not born guilty of sin? Or are you saying that I was not born with the propensity / predisposition to sin? The 1st option I can accept. But to the second option I must ask, how do I reconcile your point with Romans 5:19; For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners?

Peace

Bill Garber 13 hours ago Reply

Herb,

I appreciate your interest in God's trustworthiness. It is God's trustworthiness that Grace at once reveals and substantiates.

There will never be any doubt in the mind of every sinner saved that they were saved as a sinner after being judged to be in open court. Grace is how God avoids putting Himself in the position of having to depend on the blind trust of the saved in believing that in the unknowable mind of God every saved person was worthy of salvation and quite apparently those not saved were no so worthy.

Instead there is the judgment so there can be no room for subsequent doubts about God's intent. Grace, once an for eternity, saves the sinner from certain, justifiable separation from God and certain death. As such, God is proven to be transparently and utterly trustworthy. Doubt and separation will forever be foreclosed on.

Now, whether each sinner is unavoidably, accidentally or on purpose a sinner will not matter in the judgment. The judgment is about what is, not about why what is, is. God is in the business of saving sinners. The judgment will confirm to the universe as well as to each saved one, that every human saved is a proven, judged, and undeniable sinner, and therefore God is transparently trust worthy in the deepest parts of God's character we can possibly imagine.

Using biblical metaphors and their words as a cookbook for escaping being judged a sinner will, if successful, preempt our qualifying for God's grace, for which, of course, we are already disqualified before breaking out the measuring devices.
Adventist Today: What does Sin have to do with Righteousness?

http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=759&action=print
La Sierra University Resignation Saga: Stranger-than-Fiction

Submitted Jul 1, 2011
By Atoday Editorial Team

On June 10, 2011, three La Sierra University (LSU) faculty members and a board member resigned. News of their resignations set off a storm of rumor and speculation.

The stranger-than-fiction saga came to the attention of the general Adventist public with a short announcement by the LSU administration. Four individuals — Jeff Kaatz, Vice President for university advancement; Jim Beach, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; Gary Bradley part-time contract biology professor; and Lenny Darnell, member of the Board of Trustees — had been asked to resign. The announcement specifically stated the resignations were not connected to the on-going controversy over the teaching of evolutionary biology at LSU, a claim that was initially doubted by many.

Central to the resignations was a digital recording made by one of the four affected individuals. Within hours of the announcement, Adventist Today received a copy of the recording from an anonymous source.

The first part of the recording was of a meeting, held in a public hall on campus and called by North American Division leaders. This was to discuss the likelihood the church’s accrediting association would probably not re-certify the university for a maximum five-year term. There was a perception, reported the leaders, that LSU was ‘deviating’ from standards of instruction expected of Adventist universities. It was clear from the recording, the word ‘deviating’ was generally held to refer to LSU’s approaches to teaching biology.

Prominent speakers at the meeting were Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division (NAD), and Larry Blackmer, NAD vice president for education.

After the meeting, the digital recording device/telephone, operated on his person by one of the four men, was left running. This appeared unintentional while the four men went to a private home to discuss the meeting and watch a basketball playoff game between the Lakers and the Dallas Mavericks.

Apparently unaware the follow-up discussion was part of the recording, one of the men forwarded a copy of the recording to various individuals, so they could hear the meeting with the church officials. This digital file was forwarded by someone else to the General Conference. When Larry Blackmer listened to the recording he discovered it contained more that just the meeting at which he had been a principal presenter. After listening to the entire recording, including the conversation during the basketball game which contained some rather inflammatory rhetoric, he had the recording transcribed and sent a copy of this to the leadership of LSU. In light of that transcript, the four men were asked to resign, and they complied.

What was so inflammatory about the recording that the men agreed to resign?

The primary area of discussion at the private home was the apparent impasse between the academic accreditors and the university. The men believed this was less to do with LSU itself than with the need for the church to come to terms with scientific evidence that seems to contradict official Adventist doctrine.
This might be controversial, but would probably not have cost them their jobs. The men did not, however, limit themselves to a discussion of the issues. They made very unflattering personal references to Dan Jackson, the NAD president, calling him a ‘eunuch’ with little power in the church. They described the division office as, “the weakest unit in the whole church.” The recording includes disparaging remarks about those who fail to adequately plan ahead because of their earnest belief that Jesus will come very, very soon. One voice notes that General Conference President Ted Wilson is such a man. The men also criticized Randall Wisbey, LSU president, stating he is, “a pastor first and a church administrator second.”

While many an Adventist employee has voiced unflattering opinions about various church leaders in private, offering such baldly stated criticism to the world (albeit inadvertently), made strong disciplinary action unavoidable. Further, if these personal remarks were not enough to compel the resignations, there was additional incriminating content. The men casually referred to their drinks as ‘brew’ and profanity is heard occasionally.

Sources have told Adventist Today that each of the four men independently confirmed he had been drinking alcoholic beverages during the private-home discussion (Use of alcoholic beverages by faculty, staff, and students at LSU is prohibited and, according to the latest edition of the faculty handbook, may result in expulsion or termination). The resignations were asked for and given.

Adventist Today has also learned the gentlemen involved were offered an opportunity to avail themselves of the grievance process rather than resign. In addition, the LSU Board received and considered the Faculty Senate’s request for the resignations to be rejected. Following a robust discussion this was not accepted and the board ratified the requests for the resignations made on June 10.

The resignations of the two vice presidents apply only to their administrative duties, not to their tenured teaching status at the university. Dr. Bradley, a semi-retired contract teacher, had no tenure and Darnell’s resignation applies to his position on the Board of Trustees.

The specific and immediate causes of the resignations appear not to be directly related to the controversy over the teaching of evolutionary biology at LSU. However, as one commentator suggested, these events might be perceived as representing collateral damage caused by being caught in the crossfire over that issue.

**Bob Pickle**

If alcohol was a reason for the resignations, and if "Use of alcoholic beverages ... may result in expulsion or termination," why are Kaatz and Beach still employees at LSU? Seems a little contradictory.

**Bill Cork**

"What was so inflammatory about the recording that the men agreed to resign?"

I don't know. How about functioning as a news organization and publish the transcript so that we can judge for ourselves?
Elaine Nelson  
3 days ago  Reply

The SDA administration should be trembling in their boots: anyone could "plant" a mike in one of their private conference rooms and record some most interesting conversations.

Thoughtful  
2 days ago  Reply

Since I am not a lawyer my confusion simply manifests my ignorance, but the following questions immediately come into my mind:

Does California law apply outside of California? Can an individual living in Maryland and listening to the tapes or reading the transcripts in Maryland be sued for violating California law? As a non-lawyer that seems a bit strange, if it is true.

What makes a conversation with 4 people privileged? Is it the fact that it occurs in the home? How big a group does it take before this is a "public" meeting that is unprotected? Would 5 or 6 or 12 or 20 make it a public non-protected event? If the public meeting wasn't protected because there was no hint of privileged information on the tape, is a group of 4 protected even without hint of saying they were engaged in a private conversation?

When this conversation was sent to a journal, the journal (and I assume this would also be true of journalistic blog sites) has protections. Does the publication of it make it no longer privileged? Does sending it out make it no longer privileged—you addressed this but I have the sense that different lawyers would have other arguments.

If it is sent out to a number of people, does that make it no longer protected and the one who sent it the only one in danger of being found in violation of the law?

Can a tenured professor be terminated for any cause whatever? Would the tenured professor be able to teach even if convicted of robbery, embezzlement, rape? Would the use of alcohol, in obvious violation of the school principles and rules, be such that a tenured professor could be removed for this?

Elaine Nelson  
1 day ago  Reply

The four accused should not have been so hasty in signing any statement. This would have caused better minds to contemplate the fallout. No contract or statement should ever be signed "on the spot." In this action, there was error all around.

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"God is love" (1 John 4:16), and that's why I trust him.

The heart of faith is relationship. The heart of relationship is trust. When trust is broken, our relationships don't work.

From the time we enter the world, we learn about trust. Babies who are fed, changed, held, and soothed when they cry learn that they can depend on those around them to meet their needs. Babies whose needs are not met learn that the world is a scary, random place where anything could happen. If they experience severe abuse or neglect, they may grow up to become mistrustful, hypervigilant children who try to control everything they can about their lives -- including rejecting relationships with others before they can be rejected.

This is the core of sin. Lucifer became Satan when he failed to trust that God knew best how to be in charge. He wanted to take control. Eve fell when Satan tempted her to mis-trust God's instructions. "Did he really tell you not to eat from this tree? Maybe he's trying to hide something from you."

When real trust (that has been earned and is followed through on) is present, our relationships work the way God meant them to, even if we're not perfect all the time.

When we mistrust others (either because they are not trustworthy or because of damaged trust in our past), we focus on faults. When we mistrust God, we look for flaws in the Bible, in other Christians' lives, and use those to explain why we can't trust God and walk forward in relationship with him.

When we trust others, we are generous with their faults. While we do hold them accountable, we also realize that not everyone is perfect. When people mess up, we say, "That's okay, it happens." or "I forgive you. Please don't do it again." When we trust God, we accept that we may not understand everything about the Bible or God's instructions to us, but we believe he intends it for good. When we see flaws in other Christian's lives, we remember the flaws in our own lives and believe that God is working in their lives just as he is in ours.

This is the core of faith.

Do you question if God exists? Are you living in an attachment-disordered relationship with him? Are you hypervigilant about his faults, trying to maintain control over your own life at all costs?

It's pretty hard to trust someone who isn't there. First, try asking him to show you his presence. Find out if he is trustworthy enough to enter a relationship. Like a baby, cry out to God about everything you need. Relax in his arms and let him show you, step by step, the wonderful world he has created for you. Try building trust with him one moment at a time and discover the freedom that comes from resting in him and letting him care for you.

Are you a growing Christian, exploring the boundaries of your faith the way children explore the boundaries of their world and their parents' words? When you ask "why," see what happens if you assume that God DOES know what he's talking about and is trying to help you. See what he shows
you. Try obeying something he says, even if you don't fully understand it yet, and find out what happens. If he tells you, “No,” try imagining what danger he might be protecting you from.

Perhaps you're a rebellious “teenaged” Christian, rejecting what you’ve always been told and looking for your own way of understanding and doing things. Perhaps you have been scarred by broken trust and relationships that give you good reason to question God. The good news is that his heart is big enough for all your anger, all your questions, all your doubts. Bring them to him. Go ahead, yell in his face. Like Job, you may be surprised by a powerfully personal encounter with the Almighty, even if it doesn’t come packaged with a neat set of answers to every question.

If you are a mature Christian who has been walking with God for some time, rejoice in the evidences of his trustworthiness in your past. Thank him for the ways he has provided and led. And ask him what he wants to entrust to you. How can you better reflect his faithfulness into the world around you?

And let us all look forward to the day when we can say together, “This is our God! We trusted in him, and he saved us! This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!” (Isaiah 25:9, NLT).

Roy Binghy 1 day ago Reply
"Go ahead, yell in his face"??? Do we do this while at the same time assuming "that God DOES know what he's talking about and is trying to help you"?

Get the book: http://www.holditpreacher.com

Trevor Hammond 23 hours ago Reply

The 'yell' part should perhaps be considered in the context of the sentences before it which says so much about how reliable God is in spite of our ‘childish’ behaviour and ‘tantrums’.
"The good news is that his heart is big enough for all your anger, all your questions, all your doubts. Bring them to him" says it all.

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There are so many different times and ways that we yell at God just like ‘cry babies’ so to speak; but still our Father in Heaven is ever so willing to ‘be there’ for us. Patient; Caring; Bonding; Forgiving; Loving. Wow, God is just soo good! I like this article...it really touches my heart.

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Some years ago whilst at a beach picnic and enjoying a dip in the ocean, a nasty jellyfish (we call them blue-bottles) stung me across my neck and shoulder. It was quite a big one and I had to pull it off (got my fingers stung too), but the nasty venom set in quickly causing severe pain and also affected my breathing and heart rate. I started yelling at my family members to quickly get some vinegar or hot water to wash the area which would have helped to break the toxins down. They were so nice in spite of my yelling. They quickly tried all they could do to assist in relieving my discomfort and pain. They were understanding and patient in spite of my ‘yelling’. They responded by continuing to assist me without challenging my inappropriate yelling which was really uncalled for.

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God IS and DOES so much more than that! WOW! Praise the Lord!
Trevor Hammond

Dear Kendra Perry

Ma'am, I think of Psalm 107 whenever crying out to God is mentioned. It doesn't stipulate any pre-existing criteria or condition, except desperation, in order for God to engage in our cries for help. I'd like to think of it as the Yeller's Psalm.

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"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress."

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There is so much more you have written which is soo inspiring besides the 'yelling' which cropped up in the discussion so far.

I particularly like the tone and the practical 'real' aspects of childlike faith in terms of our relationship with God. The reason I get so excited upon reading such an article is because there are no complicated overtones and I can relate to it by my personal experience with God's Power, His Love and His Grace which brought deliverance and hope in my life.

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I'm one of those regular 'been there' - 'done that' - 'got the fed the pigs T-Shirt' guys who has experienced the wonderful love of God and His Saving Grace.
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My wife may want to use this article for Sabbath School when I show it to her...

God Bless

PS. I hope this article will be the Jan 1 page for a Morning Watch Yearbook...let us know when it is published.

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