July 22, 2011

**This Week at Adventist Today**

**When the Flock Gets Fleeced:** Why do devoted Christians so frequently fall prey to con artists who offer huge returns 'for the Lord's work'? The love of money seems to be the beginning of many, if not most Adventist fiduciary evils, and Lawrence Downing offers some simple counsel: "Buy a good pair of running shoes." The attraction to financial scams seems endemic in the church, from top organizational types to lowliest pew warmers. [Read more](#)

**Why La Sierra?:** Why has the La Sierra situation now moved into the arena of the Accreditation associations? Nate Schilt suggests there's something unique about La Sierra University that attracts this kind of unwelcome attention. [Read more](#)

**Of Writers and Readers:** Nathan Brown calls on us 'to teach readers how to read.' This he suggests is by communicating in ways that convince readers they are actually a lot smarter than television or other communication gives them credit for being. In a world where blandness and propaganda vie for supremacy, [What Faith has to do with Righteousness by Faith:](#)

Herb Douglas poses serious questions on faith to AToday readers: "How does a correct understanding of ‘faith’ affect our view of righteousness by faith, or justification by faith? Or what John means in Revelation 14:12, in the phrase, the faith of Jesus." [Read more](#)

**Response to La Sierra University Problems:** In a letter dated July 5 and just released by La Sierra University (LSU), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (the academic Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities in the Western United States) reports on the commission’s consideration of a report of its Special Visit team. In part, the letter says the following: "The Special Visit came in the midst of a contentious public controversy over this matter [relating to the teaching of both evolutionary biology and creationism at LSU] between LSU and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with which La Sierra University is affiliated."

The goal of the Special Visit was to determine
Brown says there's a better, third way. [Read more]

**Rise of Tea Party Adventism:** Ervin Taylor suggests there is a 'Tea Party' in Adventism. This group has been seriously brewing its agenda since at least 1988, and even has a name. Read the Adventist tea leaves with Erv this weekend. [Read more]

**Adventist Historical Documents: Real and Fictional:** In an age of Photo Shop and accusations of forged birth certificates, Erv Taylor wonders about some of the alleged 'Adventist documents' that some critics say are certainly out there if they could only be found in attics and vaults. [Read more]

Whether LSU was addressing this challenge in keeping with generally accepted principles of higher education related to institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the appropriate roles of the faculty, administration and governing board.

The Special Visit team expressed concern over the structure and functioning of the governing board. It noted, “there were divisions on the board concerning the controversy in the teaching of science.”

WASC stated “the recent forced resignations, which were obtained through the actions of the board chair, reinforce concerns about institutional autonomy because of the multiple roles that the board chair has in the University and in the Church.” [Read more]
“You can’t lose. They have a gold mine in South America that will produce enough gold to cover any money investors put in. It’s a sure fire deal.” With these words, spoken to me by a close relative, I was introduced to yet another get-rich-scheme foisted on gullible and trusting Adventists. The principals in the venture, my relative explained, were all Adventists. One of them, a well-known musician on the camp meeting circuit, I had known since childhood. Another, an Adventist college administrator, had been my relative’s long-time friend. As the investment opportunity unfolded I asked why, if there was a gold mine, they needed our money. The clincher: they want their friends to benefit from this investment. They know when we make money the Lord’s work will benefit. I did not invest. My relative and all others who invested lost everything and the promoters went to prison for fraud. There was no gold mine.

The person who had provided special music the previous Sabbath called me with this question: “Why did you have (and he gave the name) offer prayer last Sabbath? Do you know he has taken my father and others in your congregation for hundreds of thousands of dollars?” The question caught me off guard. I did not know. I had known the individual some years before but had not seen him for more than 20 years. I explained I had no idea he was into investments.

The son gave further details. The family had attempted to discover where the money had gone but the person said he did not really know. Neither he nor the father had any records, except for canceled checks. I checked the story the son told and found it to be true. Many other Adventists had been taken in by this super pious swindler. He had a lot going for him. He was a recognized leader in the Prayer Warrior groups. He conducted prayer seminars. He could pray you under the rug and bathe his investment pitches in spiritual jargon. He told his investors he was using his God-given gifts to create wealth so he could further God’s work and urged them to follow his example. The ‘investors’ lost all of their money. He to this point has avoided the legal system. His investors are reluctant to file charges. They still have hope he may yet come through.

These examples of affinity fraud can be multiplied over and over. A smooth talker who knows the vocabulary and understands human greed, gullibility and their victims, can lead even the most astute down the primrose path and Adventist are not the only ones to walk this calamitous journey.

“Fleecing the Faithful — Again” is an article in the June 2011 Christianity Today (p. 54). Kristian Westergard, a well respected churchman, managed to entice fellow believers out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Westergard developed close ties with people who operated well-known and respected Christian organizations. These individuals, while not promoting...
Westergard’s investment schemes, provided him credibility. The investors do not expect to recover their funds.

Those who study affinity fraud report that difficult economic times, like now grips America, are a boon to unscrupulous investment promoters. People become desperate and grasp toward even the most improbable investment schemes in hope of a payoff. When it is a church member who offers the ‘can’t miss deal,’ the risk of being taken for a ride increases. Keep your ears open. Listen for statements couched in religious jargon, “I’ve felt the Lord leading.” “I really feel called to share this with God’s people.” “Think of the blessings this investment can be to the Lord’s work.” “We know we’re in the last times, it is vital that we have funds to further the Work.” When you hear these phrases, get out your running shoes and get those feet going away as fast as you can! Put up your beware flag when the person assures you of a steady return, double that beware notice if the promised return is above ordinary, and ordinary returns in today’s market are in the range of 1.5 % to 3 %. An assurance of 10% or more is a clue to put on those running shoes!

Demand full financial disclosure, including an audited statement and a written contract that you can show to an attorney for review.

If you do invest, do not put in any more money than you are willing or able to lose and do not tap your retirement funds to invest in a ‘can’t lose’ investment scheme. People who pull out their retirement nest egg and put it into some investment project court economic calamity. Think Bernie Madoff — itself an example of affinity fraud — if you need documentation. To those who are inclined to seek shady investment opportunities, may I interest you in a sure fire chance to double your...on second thought, under the mattress may not be such a bad idea after all.

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**Guidelines for Productive & Courteous Comments:**

- **This is the writer’s court & play – no upstaging please**
- **Stay on topic – don’t wander off chasing butterflies**
- **Be brief – no more than 3 modest paragraphs – if longer, you are too windy**
- **We ask you to be considerate & courteous – the golden rule, remember**
- **Absolutely no denigrating of individuals – to err, earns banishment**
- **Make this a stimulating encounter & come back often**

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**Elaine Nelson**  
6 days ago  
A very timely article. With the economy today people are being offered all sorts of "lifetime" opportunities to make big money. That's a sure sign, as you say, to get your running shoes.

Elders are often more vulnerable because they grew up in a world where a man's word was his bond and are far too trusting--especially if the "pitch" comes from a well-known church member are
prominent one.

A close relative lost several thousands in a somewhat similar scheme: someone called, claiming to be a good friend of the grandson who had been in an accident and needed money (the amount was even suggested) to pay or medical bills. This relative sent the money and of course, never heard from the person again--nor did the grandson know him.

There are so many schemes on the internet today, but while most folks know to delete them, when a "member of the Adventist Club" has a proposition too good to miss--it's best to let it pass by.

Elaine Nelson
6 days ago Reply

There was no mention in this article of the greatest SDA "investment scheme" conducted by the official church: The Davenport scandal. There were many faithful, often senior members, who, based on the church affiliation with this scheme, put most, or all of their savings into this "church-blessed" endeavor--only to lose everything.

There have been others: The literature evangelism scheme in the Columbia Union to have children's videos to distribute, similar to "Veggie Tales." After several million dollars had been put into this (repeatedly the video company needed "more" to complete the project), it turned out to be a loss for the conferences involved.

Remember: whey the church needs you money for such projects, like Wall St: the profits are privatized; the losses are socialized. Your tithe money reimburses the church for its inept business practices.

Not to mention Harris Mills: a profitable company until the church "took it over" and immediately ran up great losses. There are more, and someone reading this can supply more info.

Patti Grant
6 days ago Reply

These two cases and more are exhaustively documented by Douglas Hackleman in his book "Who Watches? Who Cares?" Every Adventist should read this book and keep her/his running shoes handy.

Lawrence G. Downing
6 days ago Reply

You're correct, Elaine, the number of fraudulent schemes perpetrated among Adventists is extensive. Unfortunate that church administrators are not free from guilt in some of these matters.

Elaine Nelson
6 days ago Reply
Patti, there are several others detailing such schemes: "Fatal Accounts" "Truth Decay" come to mind. These were not allowed to be advertised at the Adventist Today Booth at the Atlanta G.C. Wonder why?

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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
<th>6 days ago</th>
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<td>Also, the conference &quot;Trust Services&quot; where &quot;trust&quot; means nothing. A favorite: the daughter of a faithful SDA couple who had left their home to the conference came to oversee the conference's possession of the home. When the Trust Officer came to take possession, the daughter asked what was the house appraised at, and the officer said &quot;$400K.&quot; Previously, the daughter had checked with local realtors and got an appraisal for $800K. She immediately said, &quot;I will buy the house for $400K.&quot; The officer was trapped with his fallacious appraisal and she bought the house!</td>
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I have a question? Why, among all the colleges and universities in North America, does La Sierra University (LSU) seem to be feeling heat from its accrediting bodies (Adventist Accrediting Association [AAA] and Western Association of Schools & Colleges [WASC])? Many of you understand the accrediting process and standards. I do not, so I would love your perspectives. Allow me to TENTATIVELY offer mine. I wonder if WASC really cares that much about the substance of what is taught or what the biology professors actually believe about evolution and geo/bio chronology. Isn’t the primary concern of WASC, at least on this issue, that the faculty should have control over classroom curriculum and content?

If I am correct, then we can readily understand why other Adventist universities might not be feeling the heat from their accrediting bodies. There is no palpable conflict over curriculum between science faculty and their Boards in those universities. I infer from the relative absence of conflict that biology professors at other SDA universities are doing a better job, from the Church’s perspective, of presenting the best of creation theory and science along with traditional, conservative Darwinian theory and science. Is that an unreasonable inference? The faculty at La Sierra apparently is not real enthused about doing it the way other Adventist universities do it, and, according to accreditation standards, that should be a faculty prerogative.

So as I see it, the real problem for the Church and La Sierra isn’t how biology is being taught, but the criteria by which faculty are vetted and selected. La Sierra has, over time, evolved a considerably more liberal/progressive academic culture than other universities in the Adventist system. It would be interesting for a historian to trace that process. Faculty governance, mandated by accrediting bodies, leads to inbreeding. So La Sierra has, in virtually all its departments, including the biology department, cloned liberal/progressive faculty. The Church and the Board cannot simply step in and say “Whoa, you’ve gone too far,” when constituent members rise up in protest. Like federal judges, faculty members are appointed for life, unless they violate clearly defined standards and policies, most of which have nothing to do with classroom curriculum or viewpoint advocacy.

The Humpty Dumpty of traditional Adventist orthodoxy has fallen off the wall at LSU, and at some other SDA universities he is teetering badly. I strongly suspect that putting Humpty together again must come, if it is to come at all, from inside LSU, through faculty governance, not from Board or Church action. External pressures will only serve to make changes induced thereby more suspect. In a very real sense, the faculty holds LSU hostage to faculty values and priorities. From the perspective of WASC, this is as it should be.

If faculty freely decided to teach and advocate all 28 Fundamental beliefs, would WASC have a problem with that? I doubt it. So it is not quite accurate to think that La Sierra is totally at the mercy of WASC. The responsibility, or credit, depending on how you see it, for the WASC concerns lies squarely with the faculty. The future of LSU, for better or for worse, is in the hands of its faculty, and that faculty cannot be changed to accommodate the winds of popular opinion and political power in the Church. Once all sides to the controversy clearly understand and accept this reality, options and resolutions will be much easier to perceive and implement.
Creation theory? Creation science? Oxymorons. So Nate design a set of experiments yielding data sets where we can infer from the data the existence of a God. With Dr. Greer and other faculty LSU has done the best job on presenting modern biology. The other schools are not teaching "creation science" in the classroom.

AAA is a meaningless accrediting agency. Yes, WASC wants the faculty to be able to determine the curricula and that is part of governance at SDA institutions that WASC has an ongoing problem with over the years.

You may be aware, Nate, that Walla Walla University (nee College) experienced a similar Time of Jacob's Trouble back in the late 1990s, with focus on its School of Religion.

The primary catalyst seemed to be a widely held view that prominent School of Religion teachers were leading their students away from Adventism, by allowing challenges to the faith to be openly discussed in the classroom. Furthermore, the good professors were said to be acknowledging that the Church didn't always have water-tight defenses for some of those challenges.

The then-youthful, energetic Union president, set up an investigative commission that initially created a strongly adversarial situation on campus, during a time when the college was up for re-accreditation.

It seems now that Yogi Berra has returned from the tomb all over again. If the parallels continue, the Pacific Union will at some point establish an investigative committee of conference administrators and some faculty, leading to the reassigning of some faculty and their replacement by more traditional instructors brought in from afar.
It's interesting that in the case of Walla Walla, the one theologian the union president seemed most determined to dethrone was able to sail through the process unscathed, to retire a number of years later with honors and valedictories.

Did the process work? Yes, it worked. Badly. But it worked because the composition of the investigative commission turned out to behave in a relatively balanced way, and the faculty sensed that their concerns and convictions would not be steamrolled at a rubber-stamp judgment bar.

At Walla Walla, I believe those hurt most, ultimately, were the students, some of whom lost a great deal of respect for conference workers, at times when the conference contingent behaved inexplicably poorly in public forum. The process was not necessarily flawed, but the actors failed to find a script that instilled confidence and respect in the galleries. Perhaps a more skillful board chairman could have guided the process more adroitly and avoided the cringe factor that still makes it hard for some of us to admit that, yes, we actually worked for the church during that tortured time.

It may also be of passing interest that during my years working for the North Pacific Union Conference, the PRIMARY reason given for the existence of the unions was to keep the colleges and universities on track. There is a perception that the task of keeping the colleges connected to the church is so demanding, that only an institution of supernormal political power, such as the unions, are capable to holding them to task. It's an expensive maintenance program the unions provide, but there's no doubt in my mind that this is one of the PRIMARY reasons the church is so slow to envision elimination of this layer of administration.

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Doctor Doctorf1

4 days ago Reply

Nate,

You say "If faculty freely decided to teach and advocate all 28 Fundamental beliefs, would WASC have a problem with that? I doubt it." First your naivete of WASC is astounding and you are simply wrong. WASC goes over academic courses with a fine tooth comb to make sure they are properly catalogued. Thus, as long as the fundamental beliefs are taught in a religion or theology course NOT a science course they would have no problem. If LSU tried to teach the 28 beliefs as systematized knowledge they would have a big problem with it. Furthermore, these fundamentals are taught in religion courses at LSU and LLU. But, they are religion courses. Do not think for a moment that WASC or LCME does not look at the curriculum and makes judgements as to whether a class is appropriately called science. To take the flip side if we presented a neuropharmacology course as a religion course they would question that designation. Myth topics such as creationism belong under the purview of theological/religion departments not science departments and WASC would not sign onto calling a religious topic a scientific one.

You also throw around the word proof a lot as if you were in a court of law. Science does not prove it falsifies. If a theory can explain a body of data then it is valid but if new data falls outside of being explained by a theory the science enterprise devises a new one which will explain both preceding and current data. The replacement of the oxidative theory of phosphorylation (Kornburg/Crick theory) was replaced by the chemiosmotic theory (Mitchell theory) to explain oxidative phosphorylation. New data falsified the previous theory. Such is the progressive nature of truth. Nothing is proven
Ned
4 days ago

Why Nat Schilt continues to say so much about this issue when he admittedly knows so little is a source of wonderment and dismay!

T. Joe & Barbara Willey
3 days ago

I agree with others here on the blog Nate...for one thing begin by reading the WASC Handbook and learn about accreditation (its on the Internet copyright free). It details the accreditation process. I've notice all along how naive you have been about certain important aspects of accreditation and this does surprise me because lawyers are known for investigation of evidence at trial so well that when they appear in court or taking of depositions they know the answers to the questions beforehand and have data to support the interrogation of witnesses.

The next thing is to go to the Internet and read the Self Study of each Adventist college in responses to put to them by the regional accreditation association. Not all are published but they reveal the depth (if available) that tells you considerable insights about each department, the choice of textbooks, instructor loads, difficulty in hiring qualified faculty, tuition issues, accounting practices, pressing administrative margins where the school needs to place greater diligence, etc. This accreditation issue is very important for the future of Adventist post-secondary education.

The "truthers" downplay regional accreditation because they do not understand the benefits or the future of Adventist education (at least that is my impression). Anyway, I don't mean to criticize, just do your homework and then write the column so we don't have to spend time back on Accredition 101. Loma Linda University has a very well-done self-study document and the depth of its educational programs prepared for WASC.

Why does LSU suffer the teaching of biology? That is a good question. In the first place if you were a biology teacher in another Adventist college or university you would feel the same heat that LSU has these past few years (maybe not every day, but often enough to recognize that poorly educated individuals cause the most trouble in the subject area). Being a biologist myself I have friends in nearly every Adventist school enjoying the friendship of some gifted intellect scientists. Nearly everyone who is on the cutting edge of biology have had to appear in the president's office or represented by the department chairman to defend the teaching of biology against some parent that is complaining...not so much from students. Typically this is how it begins. A student (let's say at Andrews) taking biology is not performing well in biology (spends too much time practicing basketball) and begins to see that his ambition to go to medicine is not likely. Maybe they are getting a C or lower average and during the Spring break come home and have to tell their parents the sad news that under current learning practices they will not make it into LLU School of Medicine or any medical school in Kansas City either. So they might tell of the pressure to cope in biology and the student complains of having to learn all that evolution which is confusing. In the academy the teacher was afraid to even mention the word so they entered college ill-prepared...you know the rest of the story. The parent calls the president of the college...the president calls over the teacher or
department chairman...and the conversation attempts to settle down the parent and explain the role of evolution in the whole scheme of how things work in biology.

Maybe next time I can tell you more specifically why the "truthers" focused on LSU, besides the fact that the two individuals most responsible for Adventist McCarthyism live nearby. Ultimately this controversy will not be solved by WASC standards. It will take persons like you Nate trained in law (and other endeavors) with the ability to reason and use critical thinking skills and methods to step forward and provide understanding of how science works without apology or reservations. Right now Adventism has kidnapped the progressive assumption of biological knowledge in the debate over evolution without any obligation to believe on the basis of evidence or reasons.

Cheers
tjoe

Doctorf Doctorf1 3 days ago  Reply

TJoe,

Thank you for illuminating the terrain to Nathan and helping him to understand what WASC and LCME really do. Nathan has some very good points but he does not understand how accreditation works. On the last LCME and WASC accreditation at LLU I sat through endless external self study groups as they quizzed our departments about our academic standards in science and they do the same with the religion departments. Of course LCME only concerns itself with the School of Medicine but WASC deals with the entire university and all programs. Our last WASC accreditation went well because we addressed so many issues before hand such as the publication rates of our PhD and combined degree students in scholarly journals, how we follow the progress of students post degree, how we assess learning outcomes (I wrote those documents). They also went over our Basic Science Seminar topics and content as each seminar is recorded. We have some of the finest people in biomedical sciences come in once a week and discuss topics relevant to biology and medicine. We even had Rich Cardulo from UCR discussing the evolution and function of ion channels. Remarkable how those gene sequences for particular ion channels are conserved almost identically in lower and higher order animals just as evolutionary theory predicts. After looking at our seminar topics, and what we teach we were given high marks for teaching rigorous sciences. They also liked that fact that the theology department brought on a new course called "Conflicts in Religion and Science." This class is so popular that we have to run it multiple times a year! The WASC and LCME representatives were pleased that these contentious topics can be discussed in a serious and respectful way and that this type of topic belongs in a religion/theology class, not a science class. As you know there is also a whole laundry list of other issues that WASC and LCME deal with including, governance of the faculty. I know you have been through many of these also and they are exhausting and so time consuming. Thank Godddd they only happen every 7 yrs if done right. I suspect LSU will be in for a series of invasive probes by WASC given the current climate at that institution. I really feel for the faculty and administration.
What remains troubling is that leadership back in Silver Springs is discussing why not use our own accreditation agency, namely the Adventist Accreditation Association...why have this duplicity with WASC? And you wonder at times if the same conversation takes place in the ministry leadership at LSU outside the hearing of the rotating board members that are elected (and generally not given the same respect as seen in the leadership of the different board committees). Someone in the know claims that the individual in charge of post-secondary education (all colleges and universities) in the North American Division has never had the experience of teaching in a college or university or participated in an administrative role. He has taught at the high school level, and was good at that.

Your remarks about WASC self-study at LLU remind me back in the 70s when I was a professor in the school of medicine and a group of us in science decided that we should be able to qualify for chapter status in Sigma Xi as basic scientists. We had been going to Redlands University to attend chapter meetings, why not have our own chapter at LLU. It took a year of gathering publications, seminars, attendance at scientific meetings and then writing up a proposal. They sent some of best in American science to LLU to discuss with us certain weaknesses in the proposal. We came back meet the requirements and later had a pleasant celebration with the Sigma Xi president during the seating of the chapter at LLU. Standards are important for the public trust.

Observers on the side...especially individuals poking at the institution do not know the effort it takes to ramp up a university to compete with other like institutions.

It is hard to believe this, but it is apparent that the LSU Board is split. Since over 40 percent are ex officio church leaders and none of them have had experience in education administration or class room experience in teaching, etc., no wonder WASC is attempting to reconstruct a board that does not have inherited competing dispositions against certain subjects being taught or how the teaching reaches into areas that are normally taboo to the Adventist mind. I attended an Adventist college...I still think it was a great experience and worthwhile. Then I graduated and went directly to Berkeley for further education and could compare the difference. My goodness, it would take much time to summarize the difference. But quickly. At the Adventist college I was taught to worship knowledge and at Berkeley I had to learn to question knowledge. Compared to my graduate student colleagues who attended non-sectarian colleges and universities it took me some time to learn the critical and rational thinking and questioning "game." These academic structures that require accreditation and standardization from the experience of long years should be carefully respected even if we do not understand how they work entirely. Thanks for your filling out more details about LLU and the review by WASC.

Cheers
tjoe

Don Bowen

The GC is located in Silver Spring, Maryland not Silver Springs.
In the published conversation that is, *Although Of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself*, writer David Foster Wallace urged the differences between good writing and so much of the other communications and information that compete for our attentions. He argues that one of the first tasks of a book or other writing is, “to teach a reader how to read.”

“You teach the reader that he’s way smarter than he thought he was,” he continued. “I think one of the insidious lessons about TV is the meta-lesson that you’re dumb. This is all that you can do. This is easy, and you’re the sort of person who really just wants to sit in a chair and have it easy. When in fact there are parts of us, in a way, that are a lot more ambitious than that...I think what we need is seriously engaged art, that can teach again that we’re smart.”

In a world of information, it isn’t just television that screams that we’re dumb. The sheer mass of information confounds and confuses us, giving us fact after fact, opinion after opinion with nothing to piece them together or filter out the worthless and the pointless. In our hurried and flustered breathlessness — as a friend recently commented — good, careful, thoughtful, engaging, creative and provocative writing is like taking a deep breath and feeling our thoughts and spirits begin to settle.

That is why we need good writers and thinkers, who will remind us and urge that we are smarter than we have been led to believe we are. We need people who can wrestle with an idea, a belief, an issue and from their labour call us to new ways of seeing, hearing and believing. This doesn’t happen by chance and is a discipline that grows only with practice, so we also need to make space, give responses and allow for less than the best from those of us who are committed to working on the task of writing and learning to write.

Too often, as a church, we have invested our resources in production and distribution, assuming either that we have all the content we need or that, ‘if we build it, content will come.’ So we have many slick — or less-than-slick — products and productions that seem to say little. And we work at creating a ‘brand,’ forgetting that something to say will create far greater credibility than anything we can contrive. We need to invest much more in ideas and the people who bother to try to explore and explain them — and we need to make publication space for writers to work and play with.

But writers also need good readers, people who will accept the challenge to be smarter than they are tempted and told to be. Most writers and would-be writers can accept the insult of not being paid for their work far easier than they can quell their outrage at not being read. Yes, writers need to deserve their readers, whether by effort or results, but they also need readers who will be smart, ambitious, generous and willing to risk a few minutes of their time and thinking.

Such readers should never be taken for granted by a writer but should be relied upon to read, reflect, respond and participate in the almost illusive but necessary task of communication. By his or her
writing, the writer invites the reader into his or her thoughts and experiences and hopes to share something more than just themselves. By their reading, readers demand the best efforts of the writer but will often have to forgive their honest shortcomings.

In his survey of current Adventist writing, published in, *Swimming Against the Current*, Chris Blake is both honest and hopeful. “Many Adventist articles and books today constitute a bland soup,” he suggests. “Readers are held hostage to shrill doomsayers or merchants of safe passage, while writers often appear self-congratulatory and predictable, introducing characters and themes, as Dorothy Parker once wrote, that run ‘the gamut of emotions from A to B.’”

Blake calls for new backbone and new eyes in the task of writing. “Adventist writing is not doomed to a future of the bland leading the bland. In the end, we find realistic hope whenever someone with backbone discerns and points out the truth, says it aloud, mentions the elephant in the room.”

So that’s bolder writers and smarter readers, but what of editors? Perhaps a university study guide puts it best: “Over time, editors tend to acquire a vast, scattered general knowledge and an abiding humility about what they don’t know.”

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- We ask you to be considerate & courteous – the golden rule, remember
- Absolutely no denigrating of individuals – to err, earns banishment
- Make this a stimulating encounter & come back often

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**Elaine Nelson**

Nathan, you nailed it! A writer would much rather be engaged in argument with a reader, or face total dissent, than to be ignored--but only when both the writer and what he intends to say has touched a chord.

So much of the bland articles in the Review, or on the ABC book shelves are not worth the paper they are printed on. They are an insult to most people's intelligence.

Just this morning, after hearing a new book reviewed by Jon Stewart (always a good interviewer), I immediately ordered Michael Sandel's new book "Justice" on how we can apply the old philosophical principles to the many questions we are facing today. The reviews posted by Amazon, and the author's few minutes with Jon, convinced me that it would be more than worth my time and
money to be challenged by the many questions facing us each day.

We do not need soothing platitudes, but to be challenged about the many positions we take on government, institutional, and even church policy. What is the metric which is used to make critical decisions?

Only by reading and understanding the same problems that have been faced in civilization's history, will we be able to form better judgments today.

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Ella M Rydzewski

I recognize that blog writing is set up for debate, but much of what is written deals with trivial details rather than the big picture. There is much concern with what various terms mean in Greek or Hebrew. Quotes from the Bible and White are presented with authority when one can find the exact opposite in the same writings somewhere else. I believe this is due to the differences in time and place, but this is not usually pointed out.

It is also refreshing when a writer actually learns and accepts something new or is open to a new idea. I like humility in writers who admit they don't have all the answers and share their own struggles and doubts with us and yet can share positive spiritual experiences.

In denominational magazines I often find gems hiding in the fluff, but you have to start reading an article to discover it. I find myself avoiding well-known personalities who write; you know what they are going to say before they say it. There is much triteness in church writing, and sometimes it makes me cringe. There is also an avoidance of anything that could make a writer from a different belief system look good or have anything valuable to contribute otherwise someone will assume you share their worldview.

In writing we always run the risk of criticism or we aren't writing well. There isn't space to explain all we believe, and if we leave the door open just a little, some will force their way through and distort our words.

It's not that we don't have smart readers, we have readers stuck in a generation, era, or location and unwilling to think outside the bland.
Adventism was born in the Northeastern United States in the mid-19th century. Many parts of traditional Adventist ideology have their origins in the American brand of 19th Century evangelical Protestantism. An influential book on the sociology and history of Adventism, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, considered the role that American culture and politics played in forging the original Adventist sectarian eschatology.

In this formulation, Adventism adopted a largely negative view of what would happen in America ‘in the last days.’ American converts to Adventism were presented with the traditional Adventist vision of America which was considered to be a future potential enemy of the Adventist way of life.

However, it has been observed, especially since World War II, swings in the general mood of American Adventism and the mood of the American populist political culture, have been linked in both overt and subtle ways. In the 1960s, when the American body politic was adopting and implementing what were considered ‘liberal’ political and cultural values, American Adventism, with a phase lag of as much as a half decade, began to move in the same direction. When the American social, cultural and political ethos began to turn increasingly conservative, American Adventism began to turn increasingly conservative as well.

With few exceptions, prior to World War II, Adventism generally exhibited most of the classic characteristics of an institutionalized fundamentalist sectarian group. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, this orientation in North America began to change at major Adventist medical and educational centers and in some urban areas. Educational, economic and sociological factors caused segments of American Adventism to begin a cultural shift that opened it up to the influences of contemporary values and thought. It was within this relatively new context that the overtly progressive and liberal wing of Adventism emerged. At the same time, other well defined segments, the evangelical and historic most notably, also became more visible and identifiable. A view of Adventism created in the 1920s and 1930s as being a single monolithic church entity holding to a common set of timeless ‘Truths’ was finally exposed as a myth, revealing widespread disagreements over a long list of traditional beliefs.

With some exceptions, the American Adventist political landscape in the late 1950s and 1960s was relatively congenial to beginning a process of theological and cultural maturation. Although there were temporary setbacks at some local and regional levels, there were moderate and pragmatic administrators at some Union Conferences, at the North American Division, and at the General Conference (GC) who were either sympathetic to, or did not oppose, the process of moving toward cultural and theological maturity.

One notable exception involved the GC presidency of Robert H. Pierson (1911-1989) who held office from 1966 to 1979. After attempting to institute retrogressive policies, he stepped down frustrated that he had little power to counter the forces of change moving his church in progressive directions. Another exception was Robert S. Folkenburg (b. 1941) who served as General Conference President from 1990 to 1999. He sought to institute the monitoring of Adventist academic institutions but these attempts were stillborn when he resigned amid charges of inappropriate financial dealings.
Immediately before and following World War II, the need for accreditation of Adventist colleges developed, following the example of the accreditation of the Adventist medical school at Loma Linda. This had occurred some three decades earlier and the change was providing what many Adventist progressives viewed as increasingly positive results. Over the space of three or four decades, what had been in effect, Adventist Bible colleges, evolved into fully accredited liberal arts colleges. The jewel in the crown of Adventist higher education was, of course, the School of Medicine at Loma Linda University, no longer called by its former sectarian name of College of Medical Evangelists.

During all of this period, there were opposing conservative Adventist lay and clerical elements that were able to exercise some economic leverage and political power to inhibit some positive forward motion. However, the general tide in North American Adventism from the late 1960s into the 1980s was moving Adventism slowly away from its sectarian roots.

The high-water mark of this process is difficult to mark. One notable point was the year of the creation of an organization whose explicit agenda was to oppose progressive Adventism and return it to its sectarian roots. This organization was the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) and the year was 1988. This also dates the beginnings of what we wish to call Tea-Party Adventism, whose rise is associated with the current contentious and polarizing factionalism that characterizes contemporary North American Adventism.

In the next installment of this discussion, the origins and agenda of the ATS will be reviewed based largely on the documentation assembled by the late Dr. Raymond Cottrell, long-serving Adventist editor, author, educator, and founding editor of Adventist Today.
Pat Travis

Erwin,

Why do you choose to use a "political term" for "spiritual issues?"

One needs to address issues on a meaningful basis, I suggest, and there are no direct links per se to Adventism and the "political tea party" are there? In fact many "conservatives" would suggest the "tea party and it's religious associations" are actually the modus operandi to the "sunday laws."

Your going to have to do better my friend rather than obscuring "apples and oranges."

It is true that "theological political progressives" see many issues differently than "Conservative Christians." These should be kept on separate platforms, I suggest...the theological & political.

regards,
pat

regards,
pat

Elaine Nelson

The comparison to "Tea Party" is most apt. The Tea Party is adamantly opposed to compromise, entrenched in their ideology, devotees of Grover Norquist who despies all taxes and has managed to get signatures of most of the Repubs to his "No tax" pledge.

Despite the massive population growth, maintaining finances the same, as the Tea Party demands, is an impossibility, which would destroy the lifelines of millions simply to keep their ideology at all costs.

The ATS is attempting to do the same with its Bible interpretation: maintain the status quo in spite of the vast educational and cosmopolitan level of Adventists today who will not be told what to believe simply because the ATS has made those decisions for all SDA members.

Religion, as in politics, has shown a marked adversity to party loyalty on name alone. The Independent are the fastest growing new third group, and in Adventism, the independents are growing at the same pace. No longer will a political party or a loyalty oath be signed by thinking humans.

Connie Severin

Adamantly opposed to compromise, Elaine? It's hard to compromise with someone who within the past 3 years has carried the "I won" mentality and dropped any post-racial or bipartisan notions we
might have had of him during his campaign. I don't think "Tea Party Adventists" is a good way to characterize Adventists returning to fundamentalism at all. With my military husband and our frequent moves, we've experienced numerous microcosms of society in a variety of churches, from the big ones at Loma Linda and Andrews to much more rural ones, where you tend to find the more "traditional" Adventists, usually less educated.

The church we now attend has a mix of everything - Japanese traditionalist clashing somewhat with local laid-back tendencies with a lot of military and ex-military thrown in. Hawaii is as left leaning a state as you could find, and most of the old-timers hold to more traditional values but still vote en bloc for Democrats. The more "liberal" members tend to be military/ex-military yet they are also more likely to be supportive of TEA party objectives. It's really too hard to categorize the church as a body. Liberal and conservative as far as church rules and regulations are concerned usually aren't even close to what I see as far as political beliefs.

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**Pat Travis**

4 days ago  

Elaine,

It is NOT the same. If you choose to talk about specific theological differences between Progressives and Conservatives , "do so!"

No need to choose to obscure issues under "political labels" with different parameters...but perhaps that is what you and Erwin choose rather than to focus on specific issues...which you will never be able "to compromise" in a "straight up" discussion.

That said, it is interesting how political and religious thought is being brought to a focus in traditional "liberal conservative" political ways as well as "theological" wys with the "progressive" understanding of documents...both scriptural and constitutional.

I say, "Tie them down to the chains of scripture...and the constitution." :>)

Definitely scripture...because this world and all political systems are in the process of passing away.

regards,
pat

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**Nathan Schilt**

4 days ago  

Arguing with slogans and epithets is difficult, not to mention pointless. Intellectualization of bigotry and name calling doesn't change the essential nature of the enterprise, though it certainly inspires the soprano section of the choir to soar in ecstasy. Nothing quite so invigorating as finding yourself in heated agreement with other bien pensants.

How about a blog on the rise of Hippie Adventism, demonstrating the parallels between Adventist
progressive intellectuals and the overindulged, Marxist nihilists who "came of age" in the '60's? I suspect that I could make a very compelling case for such a metaphor, particularly to an intended audience that was already predisposed to agree with me. (I happen to think, by the way, that such a comparison would be very unfair and gratuitously divisive. But if I just wanted to be mean, I could make it sound quite persuasive.)

Erv, might you not also find a compelling, and to many, offensive, parallel to SDA fundamentalists' assault on academic freedom in the shrill hectoring of the self-righteous political Left, its union benefactors, and community organizers who seek to control the lives and earnings of freedom loving, hard working Americans? Ann Coulter recently came out with a book entitled "Demonic". She makes a very persuasive case for the proposition that it is the Left, not conservatives, that exhibits and thrives on mob thought and behavior. I hear that book is really helping to unite the deep and emotional political divisions in this country. Perhaps you want to serve that role in the SDA Church?

See…isn't conscription of language and slogans for polemical purposes a really productive way to communicate and have an intelligent discussion? The Tea Party Adventism "analysis" demonstrates, if nothing else, an admirable grasp and application of Saul Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals".

Nathan,

When talking about extremism on either side I agree with you. However, in my experience the progressive intellectuals as you call them are not screaming or using strong arm or threatening tactics to bring about change in Adventist theology. It seems that the arguments progressives entertain tend to bring out a vitriolic response in conservatives. The parallel that you draw between the assault on academic freedom by SDA conservatives which involves intimidating mob tactics that public employee unions use to get their way, I think is spot on.

Pat,

It is the METHODOLOGY that Erv and I are comparing, not theological. All organizations use methods to influence others, and the manner in which they do so is not unlimited. Just as there are religious "conservatives" and religious "liberals" those are terms that have been used so long that they are usually understood by those who are neither actively engaged in either religion or politics.

I would suggest that the SDA church also has a structure patterned after much older governments, an especially Rome, and the Roman Catholic church which was patterned after Rome. The SDA church is far from a democracy, or even a representative one compared to the U.S. Here in the U.S. we have individual voting rights, but in Adventism, we elect representatives, but by far the majority of delegates are positional appointees, bought and paid for by the denomination.

Comparison to the Tea Party is similar to the comparison between the Dems and Repubs as it immediately identifies certain positions taken by those groups. The Tea Party has drawn a line in the
sand and defies the party that brought them into power.

Stephen Foster
3 days ago Reply

It is with some gratification that I find myself in agreement with Pat Travis on this—to the extent that defining sub-groups of Adventism using political terms and labels is problematic, to put it mildly.

North American Adventism comes in at least two or three "flavors." They historically have practically nothing in common politically; and seem increasingly to have less in common theologically.

Elaine Nelson
3 days ago Reply

Stephen, you have done what you objected to: identified "flavors" of Adventism. Is tea a flavor?

Pat Travis
3 days ago Reply

Elaine,

I don't mind if you choose to use labels...but I suggest the most accurate describing the difference between "historic progressives and conservatives" in both the theological and "political realm" has to do with how they view "historic documents."

Now in the case of the US Constitution I would suggest the "tea party" is the "conservative" and they respect the established historical document without it being a "living document."
Now admittedly this is a "human document" but important one nonetheless in US history.

Now regarding Scripture "Conservative Christians"... not to be confused with traditionnal/conservative SDA's that often view scripture and EGW the same...Conservatives view scripture as the inspired Word of God. "Progressive/theological liberals" have a continuum from simply a human document to "contains in areas" God's Word. It is obvious these two divisions can have no common ground when the rubber meets the road.

My objection to Erwin was that he mixes the political and theological unnecessarily to doubly confound the issues of authority...whose parameters are different both from "inspired of God" to how they are legitimately amended.

Hi Stephen...by the way it was in the 60's that the universal nature of religious accord such as WCC etc.towards the "imminent danger in the SDA playground" begin to change towards seeing "sorry...the religious rt. as the enemy" rather than the "universal accord such as EGW quoting Beecher mentions in GC and the federal council of churches that existed in her day.

regards to both,
Erv: It's possible to trace, at least through my lifetime, the parallels between the ebb and flow of (particularly) Republican Party politics (most of us Adventists are Republicans and have been so for generations) and attitudes in the church. As the Republican Party has professed greater conservatism in recent years, the Adventist Church has followed suit in the theological realm, about five years later (the Reagan Revolution really got moving in 1983, the ATS was formed in 1988, for example).

In real life, it will be interesting to see if Adventism follows the lead of Tea Party Republicans and rebels against the tremendous amount of money it currently takes to sustain the various levels of church administration. Will conservative Adventists build a groundswell for cutbacks? Actually, I think we are seeing this development already, and I expect by next General Conference Session, the movement will be a serious one indeed.

Ron Corson

As someone who agrees with the tea party ideals I am wondering what Erv sees in them that has a similarity to his "tea Party Adventists" So to aid in that here is the official description of the Tea party from their own website:

"The Tea Party movement is a grassroots movement of millions of like-minded Americans from all backgrounds and political parties. Tea Party members share similar core principles supporting the United States Constitution as the Founders intended, such as:

• Limited federal government
• Individual freedoms
• Personal responsibility
• Free markets
• Returning political power to the states and the people

As a movement, The Tea Party is not a political party nor is looking to form a third political party any time soon. The Tea Party movement, is instead, about reforming all political parties and government so that the core principles of our Founding Fathers become, once again, the foundation upon which America stands. http://theteaparty.net

Does the Adventist counterpart want less bureaucratic upper administration from the General Conference?

Does the Adventist counterpart want more individual Adventist freedoms?

Does the Adventist counterpart want greater Adventist individual responsibility?
Does the Adventist counterpart want freedom of ideas (marketplace of ideas) inside the Adventist church?

Does the Adventist counterpart want more congregational control instead of the word coming down from the GC on what the local church should do, believe, tolerate, spend their money on?

What do you think Erv...have you presented an accurate correlation?

If one ignored the bullet points in the above list would the founding principles of the Adventist church be worthy of following, It seems there once was a time when questions were asked, when the official publication presented various theological views and when the church refused to have a creed.

We should not confuse historical/fundamentalist Adventists with the above points because those things are not what the historical Adventists are looking for, As they want greater denominational control and conformity. Now if you were comparing socialists with these kinds of Adventists where the central bureaucracy rules and individuals conform to the official rules of the order...then you might have a case to be made.

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**George Tichy**

Elaine:
That's not fair! You said it all, and all right. Now there is nothing for me to add... So I can just say a big AMEN!!!

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**Stephen Foster**

Elaine,

My aversion to the use of labels evolved in connection to my conversation with Pat (among others) regarding politically active and ambitious American church folk. Labels were impeding or obstructing understanding, in my view.

As to flavors of North American Adventism, I mean of course cultural/racial segments of this Division, particularly in the United States.

Of the roughly one million Adventists in North America, nearly 300,000 are members of the so-called Regional Conferences, and there are an identified number of “minorities” in the other North American Division Conferences. The Adventists in Ontario, Canada and Bermuda are also numbered among the approximately one million SDA in North America. So when Edwin Schwisow states that “most of us Adventists are Republicans and have been so for generations” I just have to smile at the notion of the invisible hundreds of thousands of North American Adventists for whom this does not apply.

Pat, if EGW was explaining eschatology in GC, she obviously could not possibly have been talking about anyone who was a contemporary of hers; whether she was aware of this or not. (Let us not
Elaine Nelson

Sephen,

I fail to see where there has been any mention of regional conference or racial minorites. That there is not unanimity in the church is too well known. Maybe it is right that the majority of Adventists are Republicans, I have not seen such data, have you? Or, maybe some are far more vocal, while others go to the voting booth without talking about it.

Again, the reference to political parties was, in my understanding, that there are similarities in the church of which the Tea Party metaphor is a new one, just as it is in Congress. The entrenched position that the Tea Party has taken could be compared to Adventists who are closed to any idea that was not presented them at the time of their birth or conversion, which ever came first.

But there are also many Adventists who are not their grandparents Adventists and have joined the 21st century in their thinking, education, and understanding. We must learn to either accept that there are differences, or else attempt to get everyone to think the same, which, I believe, is what the current G.C. President wishes. Whether he is successful depends on time.

Stephen Foster

I understand the Tea Party metaphor Elaine. The point is that when you use labels—especially those with political connotations and overtones—there are people who have a political affinity or affiliation with those political labels who get defensive and miss the forest due to having been offended by how particular trees are labeled or identified.

I mentioned the Adventist "flavors" (and later, minorities and Regional Conferences) to point out the fact that we shouldn’t make political assumptions and generalizations about North American Adventists; because in some circles, if someone was to state, as fact, that “most of us Adventists are Republicans and have been so for generations,” they would likely get a large scale quizzical look in response.

Trevor Hammond

Guys, guys... Here we go again. Voting for the next US Presidential elections is still some time away. ‘Sides, if they’re serving decaf at the Adventist Tea Party then I’m down with it...
As long as the ‘progressive’ Adventist mutants don’t spike the tea with potassium cyanide.

T
Trevor Hammond

oops... Edit to my previous post:
it should be 'mutilators' rather than 'mutants' (apologies)

;)  

T
It has been alleged there are a number of historical documents in various places (e.g., attics, basements, Double Z file at the EGW Estate) that could shed a great deal of additional light on past and present Adventism.

Currently, I hold the view that many of these purported documents are either forgeries or represent fictitious or fabricated stories about documents that do not exist. But in the hope that some might actually exist, here is the first six currently on a list that just came into my hands.

This is a request for anyone interested in a better understanding of the history of Adventism to look in their attics and basements for the following documents which are alleged to exist:

1. The receipt James White received for paying the Federal Army so he wouldn't be conscripted to fight in the Civil war

2. An 1836 Portland, Maine, High School Annual, with a handwritten note from Joseph Smith to Ellen Harmon, asking her to consider becoming his 'first wife' and to journey with him to Nauvoo, Illinois

3. The famous 'Secret Scrap Book' which contains notes and rough drafts of both the original Great Controversy and the Book of Mormon, both written in the same hand

4. A 'Textbook of Phrenology' used by Ellen White in evaluating the character of her husband, with marginal notes in her handwriting

5. A collection of autographs in the form of handwritten correspondence and first drafts describing several visions of Ellen White which was supposed to have been destroyed after being typed, along with comparisons of the autograph texts with what is purported to have been the exact typed copy of what had been originally handwritten, with marginal comments noting the discrepancies

6. A copy of a secret honorary degree received by Cliff Goldstein from the Pontifical University of Rome for, "defense of the Mother Church as a brother in arms of the Society of Jesus"

I would be happy to discuss with anyone who holds such documents an appropriate reward for placing these documents at the disposal of disinterested historians.

If anyone knows of other documents that we should attempt to locate, please let me know. As do all Adventists, all we wish to do is to determine the Truth.
Guidelines for Productive & Courteous Comments:

- This is the writer’s court & play – no upstaging please
- Stay on topic – don’t wander off chasing butterflies
- Be brief – no more than 3 modest paragraphs – if longer, you are too windy
- We ask you to be considerate & courteous – the golden rule, remember
- Absolutely no denigrating of individuals – to err, earns banishment
- Make this a stimulating encounter & come back often

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pagophilus

And the point of this blog is???

Why don't you try searching for documents J, E, D and P to back up the documentary hypothesis?

If medicine relied on hypothetical evidence we'd all be in big trouble if we went to the doctor. Luckily, it's becoming apparent that the evidence for the efficacy of antidepressants is about as good as for the documentary hypothesis. Perhaps soon people will realise that the evidence de evolution is in the same bucket.

Elaine Nelson

Excuse me! Medicine relies on less evidence for many treatments--pharmaceutical companies make claims, patients are given prescriptions, all based on very thin evidence, often times even outright fraud--when there is a change of money between the physician and big pharma. Why the recall of expensive medications that were prescribed for years??

HYPOTHESIS:

1. an assumption or concession made for the sake of argument; an interpretation of a practical situation or condition taken as the ground for action; a tentative assumption made in order to draw out and test its logical or empirical consequences.

Hypothesis is a theory, which can be overturned with better evidence.

THE JEDP hypothesis attempts to understand the various versions of similar stories in the Bible when there are contradictory, even impossible statements.
It is a temporary position to both date the various strands and try to find their common source.

Those who do not accept this hypothesis need to show why and how there are many discrepancies if Moses is claimed to be the author of the Torah. For some, it has been an "Aha!" experience that
explains these contradictory stories.

What is an alternate solution? Or, should they simply be ignored?

(The "documents" JEDP are found in the Bible we use today.) Has anyone found ANY original manuscripts for the OT?

Kevin Riley 6 days ago Reply

I thought that JEDP referred more to traditions (oral and written) rather than documents per se. While I don't subscribe to the theory myself, I see no other way to explain some of the things said in the Pentateuch than to accept that the scrolls *as we have them* show the work of more than one author. Or else the author was way more comfortable with contradictions than we are.

Kevin Riley 6 days ago Reply

No one has found - or, AFAIK claimed to have found - the original document of any book of the Bible. Not surprising, really.

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago Reply

"No one has found - or, AFAIK claimed to have found - the original document of any book of the Bible. Not surprising, really."

Which should result in less hubris and more humility. The Jews readily acknowledge that over the centuries, the stories have been interpreted by the oral story tellers. So to accept as "pure" the Bible we have today is failure to recognize that there is no such thing. Actually, every time a story is repeated, it experiences slight changes, this is the human record. For those who read Hebrew, there are constant problems: there are no vowels, which means that much has to be assumed; when finally written on scrolls, each time a section was copied, there was another risk of changes.

Today, there is such an idol made of the Bible that it should never be questioned, as it is "God's Word" somethng that is never claimed internall.

Edwin A. Schwisow 6 days ago Reply

Interesting that in the age of PhotoShop and the Obama Birther movement, this kind of speculation should be finding its way into some revisionist concepts of Adventist history. The Adventist Church, like the Bible, has its "inter-testamental period," about which much "apocryphal" writing has been circulated—that is, the period from the Great Disappointment of 1844 until the inception of the American Civil War, and the organization of the Adventist Church.

Received history via the Adventist education system fails to present in any multifaceted way the vast influences that buffeted the "little flock" during those two decades of wilderness wandering, except
in the context of the various pillars of the Adventist belief system that emerged in often highly charged debate during that time. That sociologically Adventism has so many similarities to Mormonism invites the conjecture that somehow they MUST have MORE commonality in origins than is usually admitted. I reject out of hand any possibility that Smith and White somehow met, exchanged notes, or even imitated one another from near or far—the chronology simply is not there. BUT we cannot deny that they both DID COME from the same basic region of the United States, during a particularly turbulent era of faith, and that both denominations struggled valiantly and effectively to replace unworkable early doctrines with a more forward-thinking body of spiritual guidance for their members. Their continuing parallel growth is a testament to the charisma of their founding prophets and the ability of these two denominations to surmount almost superhuman odds to press forward as emerging world-class churches.

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Doctorf Doctorf1  
6 days ago  Reply

Interesting blog. I suspect the mormons can relate as there are probably many fictitious stories regarding the founder of that great and influential religion. When read through the eyes of history, rational people see mormonism for what it is, a peep stone religion perpetrated by a huckster. Adventism has many similarities.

Elaine Nelson  
6 days ago  Reply

It is doubtful that either religion would grow and flourish in the U.S. today. The area where they both originated, was ripe and ready for such beliefs which allowed the birth of such religion, just as the "Cambellites" and JWs grew in other parts of the U.S.

The educational level, and skepticism that education brings, would curtail such rapid growth of such religions. Yes, there have been even more strange religions developing in various parts of the world, but none have drawn large numbers: Jim Jones, Heaven's Gate, Scientology, etc.

Doctorf Doctorf1  
4 days ago  Reply

Elaine,

We are seeing the same thing as Mormons and SDA young people become more educated. Reading the book Under the Banner of Heaven, the woman who married one of the Lafferty brothers was educated with a degree from BYU. When her husbands brother brought up the idea of returning to the founding Mormon tenant of polygamy she gave a very cogent retort. In the end her skepticism most likely brought on by her education cost the woman her life in the end.

Mormons and SDA's sometimes brag about their growth but when one also considers the healthy loss through the back door the numbers are not so impressive.
So many Americans claim no religion at all (15%, up from 8% in 1990), that this category now outranks every other major U.S. religious group except Catholics and Baptists. In a

Some studies suggest that Adventist members, culturally, appear to be extraordinarily susceptible to scams by other Adventists, surpassed only by members of the Mormon Church, who have even less resistance to fraud by their fellows.

These findings have been around for quite some time, and come from law-enforcement records. The common denominator seems to be that inducements to invest money in questionable causes are most persuasive when accompanied by a patina of mystical approval, a quote from the prophet, a sense that the venture at hand is approved by God.

It has been suggested by some that Mormonism is the "shadow" of Adventism—that it is a neo-pagan faith that denies the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ, the definitive sufficiency of Scripture, and the uniqueness of the Almighty, beliefs now universally endorsed by Adventism.

Yet, in many cultural ways, the two faiths share many outward characteristics—including the apparent susceptibility to charlatanry.
What Faith has to do with Righteousness by Faith

Submitted Jul 18, 2011
By Herb Douglass

I don’t think anyone has difficulty thinking that “righteousness” comes to man in any other way than through our “faith.” We also are agreed, generally, ‘righteousness’ is really the old English word for ‘right-wise-ness,’ — thinking and doing what is right as God has declared it to be. Just as ‘clock-wise’ always means going in the direction of the hands on the clock (right to left to right).

So what is faith? The pity in most English translations of the New Testament is the Greek word pistis is translated most often with the English word, ‘believe.’ The German translations have the built-in problem in that the German word for ‘faith’ is the same word they use for ‘believe’ — ‘Glaube.’ French does not have that problem: faith is ‘foi,’ and to believe is ‘croire.’

The problem is ever present when we don’t (or can’t) distinguish between ‘believing’ a statement to be true and not false and ‘having faith’ in a personal relationship. A person watching Jesus die could ‘believe’ He was dying on the Cross yet may not have ‘faith’ He was man’s Savior. Really makes a world of difference to get the meaning of NT faith right!

I remember teaching a Sabbath School lesson to a group of elderly Germans in North Dakota. We were discussing ‘faith.’ I asked them to tell me in German, “I have faith in Jesus.” Dutifully they said, “Ich Glaube an Jesus.” Then I requested them to say, “I believe you have blue eyes.” They started, “Ich Glaube…” Pausing, they glanced at each other, tried several ways, and finally one commented, “Either we have no word for ‘believe’ or we have no word for ‘faith.’” And they took several moments to buzz among themselves at the plight they were in.

The problem has been that over the years the German word ‘Glaube’ strongly tends to be associated only with an intellectual process, thus equating ‘faith’ with mental belief, agreement, etc., that man’s primary response to God is ‘to believe.’ But such an unconscious equating of faith with intellectual belief is also part of the English and French mind as well.

When Paul and Silas told the jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31, KJV), the apostles did not mean that merely assenting to the fact that Jesus was God and that He had been crucified, even believing that Jesus had promised to forgive sinners — that, believing all that, was all that was needed for salvation. A more accurate translation would read: “Have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul and Silas most probably went on. They must have painted the marvelous picture that went far beyond believing in a list of facts, more than even mental conviction, more than a passive acceptance of God’s work for us without an active cooperation on man’s part as we fall on our knees in awesome appreciation and trust in our new Savior.

In a nutshell, if God asks for more than mental agreement with the facts, and He calls it “faith.” So, what is “faith?”

How does a correct understanding of ‘faith’ affect our view of righteousness by faith, or justification
by faith? Or what John means in Revelation 14:12, in the phrase, “the faith of Jesus.”

In fact, a distortion of the NT sense of faith has led to the distortion of almost every other biblical doctrine. But that is a topic for some other day.

A little caution here. In English history we can see many occasions when we have employed ‘faith’ to depict a person’s relationship to good people as well as to bad. That is, we habitually handle ‘faith’ in a general way without precision of meaning, even as we have misused the word ‘love.’ (Such as, “I love strawberries, I love my children, I love western sunsets, Make love, not war,” etc.).

In general, faith describes a mental process by which we believe something on the basis of evidence or authority — on which we have placed value and act accordingly. However, that evidence or authority may, or may not, be in itself trustworthy, that is, “truly worth our faith.”

Mankind has done many foolish and even horrible deeds, as well as a long list of commendable acts, in the name of sincere faith. But faith as a mental process is never good or bad, right or wrong. It is simply that process by which a person believes what seems to him or her to be believable, and acts accordingly. The value of a person’s faith depends upon what he or she chooses to believe. Its worth depends upon the quality of person or concept that commands or evokes conviction, allegiance, and commitment.

Consequently, error does not become truth merely because a person has faith in it. Faith in error will not produce the fruit of truth no matter how sincere a person may be.

Biblical faith is specific and unique. It describes the person who chooses to believe, trust, and obey God. This principal is vital — the object of one’s faith determines its value. Perhaps the only categorical definition of faith appears in Hebrews 11:1: “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (NIV). Then Paul, knowing a cold definition would never be sufficient, hastens to write a long chapter that has become a classic in world literature. Paul pictures faith in three dimensions, in living color as we remember what faith did for Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc.

Such men and women were uncommon heroes of their generation. They did not fade into the wallpaper or blend into the spirit of their age. Although it is easy to remember them for their remarkable achievements, we must never forget that it was their faith that made them what we honor them for.

When we review the results of faith that God approves, it is obvious faith consists of something more than mere mental belief, even more than enthusiasm and zeal. Faith for the biblical stalwarts was the way — the only right way — for each of them to relate to God. It involved (1) a correct understanding of God’s plan for them, (2) the will to respond as He wanted and, (3) an abiding trust that He would continue to do His part if human beings would do theirs.

For all the biblical heroes, faith was saying ‘yes’ to God, a willingness to do whatever He commanded. Faith was belief, gratitude, trust, obedience, and deepest conviction all wrapped up in a cheerful companionship with their Lord and Master.

In other words, righteousness by ‘faith’ includes all that!!
Nathan Schilt
1 week ago Reply

So tell me, Herb - can I believe a statement to be untrue and still have faith in the larger Truth that the proposition, limited as it is by human language, conveys? Can I say, for example, "I do not believe that life on earth was literally created in the six 24 hour days depicted in Genesis 1," and still believe that the story as told is the best possible revelation of God's character and action that I, as a finite being, am capable of understanding?

In other words, can we do a Dan Rather number on scripture, accepting that the details may not all be accurate, but at the same time embracing with all our hearts the metanarrative as God's revelation to us about ourselves as fallen humans, and about His character as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer?

I suspect that this idea is probably too post-modern for you. But I'm interested in your perspective. Historically, we Adventists have been programmed to see truth as propositional first and relational second. It is my conviction that God speaks to us not so much to inform us as to evoke a response. Thus, via perhaps a different route, I come to what I think is your conclusion: A relationship of obedience to the sometimes a-rational, sometimes irrational, and yes - sometimes rational - voice of God leads to vertical and horizontal covenant relationships, which in turn lead to propositional insights which preserve, reinforce, and enhance the covenant relationship, in turn keeping us attuned to the voice of God. Would it be reasonable to suggest that this is the life cycle of faith?

laffal
1 week ago Reply

Nathan,

Obviously I'm not Herb, but I would like to throw something out on your proposition. I believe the Bible outlines clearly distinct but vitally related concepts about God as the Creator and His relationship to all things created, especially mankind. I'm not so sure that such a story line as you proposed would captivate the human heart that is described as "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Maybe for you, but for the masses it appears to be a stretch to me. Here are a
few of the important links as I see them.

The 6 day / 24 hour creation model is important for the following reasons as I see it in the Bible. 1) The power element. The Bible says that God calls those things that are not, as thought they are. It is important to us, where we are with our inherited / cultivated tendencies / issues with morality and responsibility to understand such a power that can / did create the heavens and the earth in such a manner. And in line with Herbs post here, Hebrews 11:3 seems to cement the concept of the faith that accepts / appropriates the revelation of this power. 2) This power, with its instantaneous features, was / is used for our benefit in terms of delivering / enabling us from the sin problem. 3) It is the same power that will be used to change our vile bodies into those glorified bodies that are the promise of our loving Father, purchased by our loving Creator / Redeemer. And it is my understanding that when the redeemed standing in the precincts of the New Jerusalem, after the destruction of all things sin, effects and effected, they will witness power of God when He recreates the heavens and the earth for our eternal abode.

Now for giving us a personal revelation of Himself for the purpose of establishing a covenant / bonded / relationship reinforced by obedience thru staying attuned to the voice of God. I don't see, or have not heard any greater means to do so then to take the time to grasp that a God with such power would be willing to give up all of His divine rights, including the personal, free use of this power, to place Himself where we have to contend with the inborn / personally developed issues with morality / sin by faith alone, to suffer the indignities of being faithful to His heavenly Father, and suffering the separated of feeling separated from God as the curse for our sin.

And it is the power that I believe is the central focus of Bible faith. When we take God at His word, the same power is now available to us. We can experience what He says, instantaneously, by faith... whether we see or not, whether we understand it our not... And I believe it is the lack of willingness on our part to accept the dimensions of God's creative power as they relate to our finite existence that we struggle so much with what it means to trust and obey.
reprobates and murderers, including Samson who took thousands with him in suicide. That should leave none of us out. Who among us can top their unlawful activities? It sounds mightily close to universalism. And why not: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged."

Kevin,

I'm not so sure what you are asking me to think about, but I will say this, I don't see that it's my place to question why He does what He does, and when He does it. He's God, how am I going to comprehend anything concerning Him with my finite mind.

I do believe your on to something with the belief (and I might add faith) in God, allowing Him to take care of the doctrinal issues.

I do not see how the language or concepts of time and space can possibly capture an accurate picture of God's creative process. Nor do I believe that the insights of science can capture that picture. God still thunders at our logic, science, and pretensions of understanding: "Who is this that darkens my counsel? Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?"

What appears with astonishing regularity, as a leitmotif in scripture, is a transcendent God who intersects and confounds the natural order that He has created, who is contemptuous of the prevailing moral order and social order, and who refuses to be limited by rational order or expectations. Those who yield to His revelation and choose to live connected with the transcendent God, while living in the world of natural orders, find meaning and purpose. They are much more likely to proclaim, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him," than to boast, "We have the truth."

God's actions, creates, sustains, intervenes. Herb, once again I see too much emphasis on "our faith" as if our faith becomes a means of our salvation. We need to remember that faith, it is a gift from God. Our faith doesn't save us, Jesus is our only Savior. At the same time Paul speaks about "obedience of faith" So faith involves trusting but it is not that by our faith we get to where God is. God comes down to us, remember the ladder reach to the point where we are. I truly believe faith is action, my question would be who does the action? I think God does, we cooperate with him but our cooperation is to give our will to God, remember the man who told Jesus "help my unbelief" he didn't have faith, right? but he asks God. I can not make myself justified, sanctified or glorified, it is God's work.
SS & Herb,

The Bible always makes God the provider of Grace. It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. He first seeks us and we do not first seek Him.

Faith comes by the miraculous literally hearing of the word of Christ and the prompting of the HS to receive it. Rom.10.

We must always make a distinction of faith being the "grounds of" or "means of" salvation recognizing "Faiths Spirit prompted origins" of God in the first place.

Our faith is never the "grounds" of salvation. "Christian Faith" always has an object...namely Christ. The gift of faith is "the "means" by which we hold out our hands to receive the free gift of Justification by "faith alone", the "gift" of initial faith also enables us to grow as we cooperate with the HS in holiness which can not occur simply by passivity apart from our character formation resulting in deeds of righteousness and sanctification...which I suggest also is by "faith" but not "faith alone" as understood by the Protestant Reformers.

To rely in a hyperway, I suggest on sanctification/holiness "by faith" for "our justification" is to make Faith the "grounds" of our salvation.
It is in this way that Rome and others fail to see the problem or "our faith" as a certain quality and quantity leading to our justification.

These errors begin to focus on "faith" in "our faith."

The fact remains that despite all Abrahams faithfulness and deeds...He was yet but reckoned/logizomai righteous apart from works of righteousness.

This in no way negates the process and need in growing in holiness it merely makes distinct what the "means" of grace are and what each accomplishes and never is "faith" the grounds of our acceptance else Grace is not the Grace of God but indebtedness to the creature.

regards,
pat

I think what is being lost here is that "genuine faith" always acts. It is a heart felt response in appreciation for the unspeakable gift of God, when He humanity His Son to be a propitiation for our sin, that we may be redeemed / adopted / received / accepted in Him.

I believe the following quote speaks clearly to this:

"The religion of Jesus Christ has not been as clearly defined as it should be, that the souls who are seeking for the knowledge of the plan of salvation may discern the simplicity of faith... It (faith) is an
immediate, voluntary, trustful surrender of the heart to God—a coming into union with Christ in confidence, affectionate obedience to do all His commandments through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is a decisive act of the individual, committing to the Lord the keeping of the soul. It is the climbing up by Christ, clinging to Christ, accepting the righteousness of Christ as a free gift. The will is to be surrendered to Christ. Through faith in the righteousness of Christ is salvation. {1888 281.1}

Peace

Pat Travis

Perhaps we can address the issue this way. What makes the "simple faith" of the thief on the cross both "safe to save" AND "righteous before God?"

Is it his "degree of sanctification and growth in faith attained" or is it the fact that He accepted Christ as his savior and "immediately" he was both "reckoned righteous" and "safe to save" according to Christ?

regards,
pat

laffal

Pat,

Your insistence to guard against the notion that I am implying in some way, shape, or form, (I also believe you view Herb's position the same way), that we are saved / justified because of some sort of merit / credit from based based on some self-initiated action. The thief on the cross did not have the opportunity to demonstrate his faith that grasped the truth that Christ was in fact his Savior. But he did confess that faith to his counterpart on the other side of Christ. Did that confession merit Christ granting his request? NO!

The Bible is clear, yes we are saved by grace thru faith, and not by anything we can ever do, it is with out question a gift from God. Why? So nobody can boast. But, we were created to do good works in Christ Jesus, and it is Christ who prepared them for us.

James (whom I am to understand was not one of Luther's favorite Bible writers, but I could be wrong) says that faith without works is dead. James then quotes Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Then he goes on to say that Abraham was justified when he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Was Abraham justified when he believed God? Or was he justified when he offered Isaac?

I believe Abraham was justified when he believed God's promise. But I believe also that James is saying that Abraham demonstrated that his faith in God's promised to make him the father of many nations, thru Isaac, when he was willing to kill him as a sacrificial offering per God's request. Why? Because he believed God would resurrect Isaac from the dead. How else could God keep His
promise to Abraham? (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Genuine JBF always works... not to be saved / received / accepted / etc... but because it provides a new / endearing motivation to serve God... out of love and appreciation for what it cost Him / Christ to redeem us.

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Galatians 5:4-6 ESV)

laffal

addendum

"I believe also that James is saying that Abraham demonstrated that his faith WAS GENUINE in God's promise to make him the father of many nations, thru Isaac, when he was willing to kill him as a sacrificial offering per God's request."

Pat Travis

Laffal,

I beleive in growing in holiness and giving evidence of being a follower of Christ.

The issue is, IS this growth how I am "considered safe to save" and "am reckoned as righteous" OR am I safe to save and "reckoned as righteous /justified" the moment I accept Christ.

You see Herb feels that the latter is but is "legal fiction."

How about you?

laffal

Pat,

Your not real clear in your last statement concerning "legal", which I believe Rome accused Luther's JBF of being. But I will say this, The righteousness of Christ as a free gift of God the justifies the believer who receives the gift is perfect and complete.

I believe what is at issue NOW is the justification becoming complete in terms of the believers experience in the pathway / growing in holiness. If this is not possible, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, which you seem to adamantly oppose, then what will bring about the return of Christ if it is not the harvest being ready to reap?
Pat Travis
Laffal,

This is always the issue of those who see "Righteousness by Faith" differently than the Reformers as the "1888 message."

That is, >>what will bring about the return of Christ?<<

How about when "this gospel of the kingdom is preached to the whole world then shall the end come."

The other issue often held by that understanding though not necessarily yours is that "complete holiness" is necessary or Satan was correct the "law can not be kept." So in reality the creature by Grace and their perfect "spirit" led obedience is vindicating God...and He can come.

Thus Mankind's fulfilling "God's grace in growth in holiness" vindicates the God of Grace. There is something seriously upside down about that view.

regards,
pat

laffal
Pat,

I have no issue with the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 being that which will bring the return of Christ. But there is a word you left out... "as a witness." I know that we do not agree on the dimensions as to what this means, but I still can't understand why we can't afford ourselves the latitude to consider that the truth about JBF has in it the power to experience the righteousness of Christ fully... BY FAITH?

As for something being upside down about God being vindicated by His followers who have willingly followed Christ, by faith, thru grace, by which they experience / demonstrate the fullness of God is understandable, but I don't believe it's all together reasonable. Here is why.

Yes God is God, and there is none like Him. But I don't proscribe to Calvin's view of God's sovereignty. I don't deny or question God's sovereignty, but I believe in choosing the way in which He would redeem mankind from sin and restore His image in them, it suggests that He put Himself in a position to be questioned. In my view, God is anything but insecure, He knows who He is, and He knows what's right / best, and He also knows what will / will not work. At the end of the day all of God's kingdom will be in perfect harmony once again. And I believe for the most part is because God put Himself in the position by which His creation could see for themselves that He is a God of
love, goodness, justice, and mercy. Why? Sin will never enter God's realm again. How? His creation knows without question He is who He says He is, and He's proved it, and it's been demonstrated in the redeemed.

Pat Travis

>>"that the truth about JBF has in it the power to experience the righteousness of Christ fully... BY FAITH? <<

Please explain to me how that differs from Trent?

What is experienced "more fully" than simply "in Jesus" I am reckoned as righteous? I have assurance that brings gratitude...felt both as assurance and the desire to please Christ.

How about this demonstration. "In Love Christ became an atonement for sin 'for the purpose' that God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly?"

How? Because He perfectly kept the law and was obedient to death...and His perfect obedience is reckoned to us as if it were ours. That 's what the Reformers viewd as JBF "alone." Not our renewal as experiencing Christ righteousness by faith "fully."

You are correct...we will never see this issue the same...nor will "true Protestants" who understand the issues of the Reformation ever accept that view.

If the SDA's accept "your view" they are not Protestants but something else...and that's ok...just don't claim to be carryng the torch because that is a "bait and switch."

regards,
pat

Pat Travis

PS Laffal,

>>and His perfect obedience is reckoned to us as if it were ours.<<

That is what is commonly called "forensic" justification which Herb considers "legal fiction."

regards,
pat

laffal

Thank you.
Pat,

We are "reckoned righteous"... "in Christ." I've never questioned nor debated that. But for whatever the reason you freely assume that when I speak of JBF being experienced more fully, I'm saying that the experience has some degree of merit that would account me to be righteous before God and His law. You've got the wrong guy there.

JBF has fruits which are the by product / the result of abiding in Christ / Him in us. And there are texts that make it clear that the objective of the gospel / JBF is that the life / image of Christ will be reproduced fully in His followers.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed (summorphos = having the same form as another, similar, conformed to) to the image (eikōn = used of the moral likeness of renewed men to God - the image of the Son of God, into which true Christians are transformed, is likeness not only to the heavenly body, but also to the most holy and blessed state of mind, which Christ possesses) of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29 ESV)

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness (plerōma = in the NT, the body of believers, as that which is filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ) of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, (Ephesians 3:14-20 ESV)

Pat,

As for Adventists carrying the torch along with the bait and switch. It is quite interesting that you can exercise to be so dogmatic about what and what is not a "true Protestant." For the most part, in our discussions, I feel like I'm in a fight with a one armed man. Your insistence to defend that to which I wholeheartedly agree with, fight against that which the Bible teaches can be aggravating, at least from the standpoint of having a reasonable dialog focused on the question and observations. But when it comes to the categorizations, as though you are right because of... What makes you different then the Adventists you grew up being apart of, and so free designate as anything but "true Protestants"? Who's the kettle, and who's the pot... they're all black?
Justification by faith is not a truth to fight over. There is no need. It is the power of God unto salvation, without equal. But for you to say that there is no place for this truth to have a place in the life / experience of the believer... which is the means to a life of holiness... is simply being irresponsible. And I'm not so sure at this point that Luther would agree altogether with you, theologically, or the means. Because at the end of the day, everything written, Bible or other sources must be rightly interpreted / understood.

Peace

laffal

p.s.

JBF is to be believed / received / experienced / witnessed as the power of God to save mankind from sin.

Pat Travis

Laffal,

All I can say is you don't understand JBF as taught by the Protestant Reformers.

No one is saying growth in holiness is not important in the believer, it is...it just doesn't Justify...or be understood as the "experience" of Justification.

May I recommend to you and any other observers...if there are any...the Book "Justification" by James Buchanan. He clearly points out the difference between the Reformers and the RCC & Trent.

Again, we can merely agree to disagree...as I have also previously with Herb.

regards,
pat

Pat Travis


laffal

Pat,
I'm more interested in what the Bible says... and that's not to discount the reformers. No one ever said that growing in holiness justifies. But I beg to differ when it comes to the experience of justification. Example:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.... More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:1-11 ESV)

The word for received in the Greek is lambano which is defined in Thayer's Lexicon as: 1a) to take with the hand, lay hold of, any person or thing in order to use it
1a1) to take up a thing to be carried
1a2) to take upon one’s self
1b) to take in order to carry away
1b1) without the notion of violence, i.e. to remove, take away
1c) to take what is one’s own, to take to one’s self, to make one’s own
1c1) to claim, procure, for one’s self
1c1a) to associate with one’s self as companion, attendant
1c2) of that which when taken is not let go, to seize, to lay hold of, apprehend
1c3) to take by craft (our catch, used of hunters, fisherman, etc.), to circumvent one by fraud
1c4) to take to one’s self, lay hold upon, take possession of, i.e. to appropriate to one’s self
1c5) catch at, reach after, strive to obtain
1c6) to take a thing due, to collect, gather (tribute)
1d) to take
1d1) to admit, receive
1d2) to receive what is offered
1d3) not to refuse or reject
1d4) to receive a person, give him access to one’s self
1d4a) to regard any one’s power, rank, external circumstances, and on that account to do some injustice or neglect something
1e) to take, to choose, select
1f) to take beginning, to prove anything, to make a trial of, to experience
2) to receive (what is given), to gain, get, obtain, to get back

I don't care how you cut it, whether we agree or not, whether the reformers taught it or not. Paul teaches that justification is a free gift of God. And any gift given must be received. How can you take a gift into your possession and not experience what it means to have it, unless you throw it away, or something in that order?

And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. (Romans 5:16-18 ESV)
Pat Travis

Read the book Laffal...you don't have the tools.

And, you say you don't care what the Reformers taught as Protestants (who in fact do believe in sola scriptura)...and, who in fact EGW said Luther so clearly taught JBF.

This is simply absurd. How can these things be for a church who wants to give the GC to everyone as if we represent the true torch of Protestantism?

If these things be so then everything I was taught as a 5th generation SDA is but a facade. We my friend have become "apostate Protestantism."

Good bye,
pat

Nathan Schilt

I seem to recall Annie Dillard drawing an analogy between spiritual disciplines and star gazing in her wonderful book, "Teaching Stones to Talk". She observed that we can believe in stars without ever going outside to gaze at the night sky. But if you want to see and experience stars, darkness is a precondition. You have to look up in darkness at the night sky to experience the breathtaking reality of a starry universe.

It seems to me that faith is seeing God experientially. The theological discussion of what it means to be "justified" by faith, or made "righteous" by faith, tends to get a bit too dense for me. But I have a hard time seeing faith as intellectual assent. I see it more as whole-body living in the embrace of a crucified, risen and living God. It is stepping out into darkness, knowing by faith that when we do, it will take our breath away, and render the glow of neon lights on the horizon an annoying distraction. The faith experience is made possible by the free gifts and grace of God. But those gifts do not translate into faith until we allow ourselves to be actively and experientially embraced by them.

It is not my calling to judge who has been justified by faith and who has not. Remember what Jesus said about wheat and tares. But if someone who claims to have experienced the starry universe has no stories to tell about how it felt, what it looked like, the places he has been where it was most breathtaking, and the places he would love to go to experience it again, please understand that I'm going to doubt whether he has experienced the same sky that I have experienced. Anyone who insists that faith is not the product of a relational process, or that it is not confirmed, renewed and refreshed through living in planes and in ways where we are bathed in God's presence, is reading their Bible quite differently from the way I read mine. At least that's the way I see it.

Herbert Douglass

I apologize for getting in to this great discussion so late in the game but I am running full blast, 24/7. It seems that I did a lousy job in unfolding what "faith" is--that one word that has divided all Christian groups for 2000 years. Faith is more than mental assent, more than saying the right prayer.
NT faith unites the response of gratitude, trust, willing obedience in a new-found loyalty to Jesus. Plug that definition into one's definition of JxF (or RxF, same thing). Does it make any difference?

Nathan poses interesting questions that we all should think about. For me, personal encounters such as God with man, God takes the initiative, or else there is no way to nail down anything about anything. When persons talk to each other, language has understandable content, otherwise, there can't be any meaningful response. Of course, we can go down the road of Post-modernism and into the so-call Emergent Church syndrome and make the person's own experience the test of all truth. But that is the door to nowhere. I truly affirm your leitmotif of Scripture--that God intersects humanity in surprising ways but always with the intent to say something about Himself and man's relation to Him. The One who Judges us one day soon, does not play games or plan hide and seek.

God may not play "hide and seek", Herb. But He remains always transcendent - beyond our ability to grasp Him. He comes to us in apparel that we can apprehend. But it does not follow that what we see and experience is the transcendence of God. In fact, even Moses could not see God as He is. Yes, God does intend to say something about Himself and humanity. But as I said above, it is to evoke a response, not to enhance our knowledge or appeal to our logic.

The story of Elisha and his servant at Dotham is repeated time and again in scripture in different ways. What God wants us to understand about Himself and ourselves is often not rational, and not subject to verification by finite measures. What metric would you use to verify the validity of what Elisha's servant saw when Elisha prayed that his eyes would be opened? What standard besides Abraham's experience with God would verify the provenance of the command to sacrifice his only son? And what evidence would have validated Noah's prophecy of a flood besides his experience with a God whose voice was true in his life?

No, subjective experience is not the sole test of God's truth. Nor do I think most Christian postmoderns subscribe to that extreme. But the conviction that truth is only Truth when it becomes personal - planted in the human heart by the Holy Spirit, and made incarnate in a singular life of faith, love, and devotion to Christ - seems deeply Biblical to me.

I would add that I think the Spirit guides us into communities of faith where similarly called people experience a sense of chosenness by responding to God's call. Scripture, the historical community of faith, and reason are all important checks on runaway subjectivism. The doctrines and practices to which God calls us are absolute obligations arising from the relationship of faith. But where we go wrong is in trying to universalize God's call by thinking others must not have properly understood His voice if they don't share our convictions.

I believe this is where I have to say ... Amen.
SS: I surely understand your concern that we do not make "faith" into our Savior, or make "faith" into the ground or means of our salvation. With the definition of faith that we have used in this blog, we are avoiding the mistake. Faith doesn't save us but we won't be saved without our faith.

Like Laffal has said so eloquently, faith is always our response to grace, to God's invitation to accept His pardon and power. Grace does not save us without faith's response. We call it the divine-human co-op, we can't have one without the other.

Pat: In our next blog we will really find out what the Reformers said about JXF (RBF, same thing). It is a very mixed-up picture. The one fact that they all agreed on is the "principle" of the Reformation--that man is not saved by the papal system of works, that salvation can not be purchased, and that truth comes from the Bible and not from church councils or papal decrees.

Where does EGW say that Luther understood clearly RXF. She extolled him for his courage in leading the movement that broke with the papal stanglehold on Europe and for making clear that mankind can go directly to God for forgiveness and power, and not through the clergy, etc. BTW, where in the Bible is the phrase, "by faith alone." A fascinating study would focus on how Melanchthon unfortunately processed Luther so that most of Lutheranism for hundreds of years forgot what Luther really had believed about righteousness by faith. Luther surely believed in the grand union of the objective ground of our salvation and the subjective experience of that salvation--both happening at the same time in what the NT called "faith." Cheers, Herb

Herb asks,
"Where does EGW say that Luther understood clearly RXF."

>>The great doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, so CLEARLY taught by Luther, had been almost wholly lost sight of; and the Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation, had taken its place. Whitefield and the Wesleys, who were members of the established church, were sincere seekers for the favor of God, and this they had been taught was to be secured by a virtuous life and an observance of the ordinances of religion. {GC 253.2}<<

Thanks Dr. Douglass for clarifying this. The nice thing about being a student is that I always open to learning. As I am learning the issue with Luther and Calvin was the view of God they had. Luther understanding of justification had certain problems, herb it would help if we could deal with the "root" and not with the causes. Why is it that Luther needed to have "a cannon within the cannon" to sustain his views? that is why Luther was not in favor of James, and even in the writings of Paul he had problems with certain parts. Luther did a great work, God used him in a powerful way, but he
kept some of his Catholics theology. Augustine was a big influence for Calvin and Luther and as we know Luther was influenced by the "platonic thinking"

Herbert Douglass 3 days ago Reply

Pat: Sorry for being forgetful. EGW does say that Luther had a "clear" understanding of JXF(RXF). The real issue today is what was Luther's understanding (which we will discuss in the next blog). Yes, SS: you nailed it--much better to get the root right. That's what a good seminary teacher will draw for you--a theological taxonomy tree showing the roots of anybody's theological statements. That's true for any Adventist author or teacher--where does he/she get his ideas from?

For this blog, I want to make sure that we understand the nature of faith for without a clear NT definition of faith, all theological statements are confusing, including many NT texts. For instance: Paul never wrote, "by faith ALONE." (Romans 3:28) but James did, (James 2:24) That may be the chief reason that Luther called James, an "epistle of straw." And had no use as well for Hebrews and Revelation.

When some Protestants use the phrase "sola Scriptura," they should not use Luther as an example because he made his own ideas the test of truth--"prima Luther." His Germon translation added, "allein"--a word that has caused all the trouble. In the grand picture, Luther was right and the Catholic's understanding of "works," papal authority, etc., were dead wrong and EGW saw that clearly. But the trail of confusion caused by "allein" was misused by later Lutherans. John Wesley, of course, saw light in Luther's emphasis on "faith" but not in his use of "allein." That taxonomy led to EGW's understanding.

Luther offered his "doctor's cap" to anyone who could reconcile James with his translation of Romans 3:23! Today, a favorite method is to say: "We were saved by faith along but not by faith that is alone." That solves nothing!

For me, Paul is careful to avoid such a dilemma. He answer questions about the nature, function and meaning of justification quite differently. These issues include: Is justification/righteousness an event occurring instantaneously or is it as an ongoing process? Is justification/righteousness effected by divine action alone (monergism), or by divine and human action together (synergism)? Is justification permanent or can it be lost?

See Romans 5:9-10: "having been. . . shall be." Salvation is by faith alone if we are speaking in the past tense of our forgiveness. When we begin speaking of future judgment, eternal life, we find Paul agreeing with James: future-tense salvation is not by faith alone IF WE USE FAITH AS A DIVINE-HUMAN EXPERIENCE. That is, synergistically, not monogistically.

In other words, Paul may speak of salvation in the past tense and salvation in the future tense but each with different requirements--but never confusion when faith is understood as a synergistic event. Hope this helps, Herb
Ella M Rydzewski

Response to original blog: I would suggest one other English word to define faith, and that is loyalty.
Like faith it can be misplaced, but it could describe a relationship based on commitment, trust, surrender, and love.

Herbert Douglass

Ella: You surely got faith's point: simply a NT word that cradles trust, surrender, loyalty, obedience and any other way to keep saying Yes to known truth. Keep writing. Cheers, Herb

Herbert Douglass

Ella: I realize that I did not finish my thought. . . . saying Yes to known truth and to our Lord Jesus whom we adore, without whom life really makes no sense. Cheers, Herb

Pat Travis

Hi Herb,

Actually, as you know, you and I have had this discussion before on the Spectrum blog.

Obviously with the quote you have one of two options. 1) She was wrong. 2) Luther did not hold the commonly held view of most scholars as to "JBF alone" also held by Calvin but rather what "some scholars" who are declared "expert" by preference would offer as an opposing view which would include "make righteous."

Actually, I will offer words from Luther's pen that are explicit. For starters Simul justus et peccator...more for your later blog.

Another thought. What group of Lutherans shot down the most recent ECT/Evangelicals and Catholics Together move? Those holding your view or the "confessional view?" You see the RCC has not changed Trent.

Herb, your a nice guy and I know both of us are sincere in our beleifs. I just know, I felt personally "unsaved" when I used to read the articles in the Review in the age of K.Wood and yourself...never quite good enough. So our conversation is not personal but concerns the life and death issue of how we can be "just" before a Holy God...and how we can be "reckoned Just Today."

Later.

Regards,
pat
Elaine Nelson

Pat, wasn't it EGW that said we should never say that we are saved?

Pat Travis

Elaine,

Actually I have "some" very good quotes and "some" would suggest that she was referring in that comment not present assurance but the fact one "could fall from grace."

Unfortunately there are also some "bad quotes."

Whidden, an EGW "scholar" who wrote "Ellen White on Salvation" would suggest that EGW did hold foremost to the "forensic view" of JBF held by the Reformers.p.53.

I think I will simply not comment further till Herb post his next "edition."

regards,

pat

Elaine Nelson

It is too easy to take EGW and the Bible out of context.

Seminary Student

Dr. Douglass , I like how you got to the root of this issue , checking my notes from Andrews University one of my Professors Dr. Canale in my Theology classes helped me to see that too . Pat, I don't know how were things , when Ken wood was at the review , I heard that he was a good man . I wasn't born during the time . I was born in the time William Johnson was the editor . On Assurance of salvation , I don't think that I can have assurance for tomorrow , because God will always give the opportunity to say no to him . That is freedom . He created humans beings who can say no to him.

Glenn Hansen

Melanchthon wrote the first systematic theology of the Reformation, the "Commonplaces of Theology." At least three editions exist, 1521, 1543, 1555. Any shifts in Melanchthon's thinking can be ascertained from these works. Luther heartily endorsed this work. "If you would understand theology, read the Commonplaces." Melanchthon also penned the treatises which formed the basis of the Book of Concord--The Augsburg Confession and the Apology. EGW calls the day of the
Augsburg Confession the greatest day of the Reformation and one of the greatest in the history of Christendom.

Luther communicated with the Reformers at Augsburg, although he himself was not present.

Herb, it is both interesting and unfortunate to observe your subtle but malicious undermining of Luther. Graham Maxwell apparently despised Luther's theology as well. He did what he could to destroy him as a voice in Adventism so you are not unique in that respect.

Luther's justification theology can be clearly discerned from his sermons and certain writings. There are hundreds of sermons, in English translation, bound in several volumes, which can or could be easily and cheaply purchased from places such as CBD and Kregel's.

"On Translating" deals specifically with his insertion of "alone" in the text "justified by faith alone." You make some of the same remarks, arguments, and objections to Luther that the Romanists did, arguments and objections which he answered in "On Translating."

Anyone who happens to be interested can read Augustine's important justification writings in his "Writings Against the Pelagians."

Melanchthon's theology and specific issues the Reformers had with Rome are explained in his 'Commonplaces of Theology' and 'Apology to the Augsburg Confession.'

Luther's thinking on justification by faith alone can be ascertained from "On Translating," "Christian Liberty," "Preface to Romans" [which warmed Wesley's heart]. His Galatians Commentary, in two volumes, is a lot to wade through but also contains many gems of thought.

Thai/ Myanmar border region
2011 Feb. 24

Pat Travis

Excellent facts and input Glenn.

I lived in Thailand in 1991. Chiang Mai is the farthest North I have been. I went by the Buddhist Temple there that appears in one of Sylvester Stalones movies. My wife and I love the food.

Be careful up there.

regards,
pat

Glenn Hansen

2 days ago  Reply
Glenn: Norma I. like Pat, spent some time visiting Chiang Mai in the 80s. What a delight! Bought a large, forever set of knives, forks, spoons of all shapes! Other great handiworks that still grace our home. And yes, the food was and still is very special, IF you can control the sauce!! Also went into the hills and saw the graves of noted "first" missionaries. Solemn, it was.

I don't have much more to say in this blog regarding the freezing that Melanchthon did to Luther's robust insights--a fact that has been drilled into history for a long time. Even some Adventist "historians" have fallen into a track that many orthodox Protestants have trod--not really understanding the larger view of EGW on the full gospel. They find in Luther what they are looking for. I like to let Luther speak for himself.

But his defense of "by faith ALONE" (alllein) seems a bit weak, especially when he calls James "an epistle of straw." Why? Everyone is on his own journey. It all depends on his/her presuppositions as to what he looks for. I wish you all well.

Cheers, Herb

Elaine Nelson

Herb, I like that:

"Everyone is on his own journey." And we may take different paths but all lead to the same place if we remember to be kind to everyone on the way and realize that we all travel at different speeds.

Herbert Douglass

I neglected to say a word about the thought that Graham Maxwell "despised" Luther's theology. Where in the world does that thought originate? After all, Graham was a distinguished NT Greek scholar and did not speak loosely about anyone, especially in Romans which was his specialty. Graham's larger view was built on the Great Controversy Theme. Hope this helps. Cheers, Herb

Pat Travis

Herb,

Both you and G. Maxwell disagree with the Reformers position of "foresic justification." One need only read "Servants or Friends" p.152 for the written proof for Graham.

It is fine if you guys disagree with the Reformers...just don't try and reframe their positions to be what they are not.
Mrs Nelson said: "And we may take different paths but all lead to the same place if we remember to be kind to everyone on the way and realize that we all travel at different speeds."

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I will respectfully disagree with the above statement. Christianity, as revealed in the teachings of the Holy Bible, speaks of one default path offered to mankind and does NOT assert or support ANY other. [John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.]

TIM 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Matt 7:13 “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Prov 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

T

So, if one accepts that only those who accept Christ Jesus will be admitted into heaven?

No Jews, Muslims, all the Eastern religions, only Christians?

What a dull and boring place!

Herb wrote:
"For this blog, I want to make sure that we understand the nature of faith for without a clear NT definition of faith, all theological statements are confusing, including many NT texts. For instance: Paul never wrote, "by faith ALONE." (Romans 3:28) but James did, (James 2:24) That may be the chief reason that Luther called James, an "epistle of straw." And had no use as well for Hebrews and Revelation."

If you are going to be telling us more about Luther in your next blog I do hope you do more research
then the above quote shows, Luther disliked James because of the works orientation. Works orientation was what he was fighting against in the Roman Catholic church. And for you to say that Luther had no use at all for the book of Revelation, why did he quote it so many times, why did he comment on it in his writings? No it was because he found the book to be so un-revealing but he certainly never said it had no use to himself or others. But when you and other Adventists keep these kinds of myths going you do a disservice to everyone.

Probably about as much of a disservice as those who act like the Reformation theology was right or even in some way unified. About the only thing unified in it was no free will and forensic justification / Penal atonement theory. Both of which are very likely wrong.

Herbert Douglass

Ron: You are right. I should have been more specific regarding Luther's opinion of Revelation. Martin Luther initially considered it to be "neither apostolic nor prophetic" and stated that "Christ is neither taught nor known in it",[Luther's Treatment of the 'Disputed Books' of the New Testament, his Antilegomena], though he did retract this view in later life. Thanks for checking,

Regarding Reformation Theology, that phrase most often refers to Luther and Calvin, as you note. Arminians would not agree that Luther and Calvin were the only Reformers. The Catholic church is still as wrong as can be regarding their animus to the "reformers." Although there has been an amazing melding of many "Protestants" with RC today, they have never understood the biblical meaning of faith or of righteousness. Cheers, Herb

Elaine Nelson

Herb,

If, as you say, many Protestants with RC today have never understood the biblical meaning of faith or righteousness, which church can make the claim that they do have the biblical meaning? Does any church hold all the correct theology? How important is it to have the correct theology?

The theodicy in the Great Controversy theme which is uniquely Adventist, has been claimed as the answer to all questions about God but how effective has it been as an evangelizing tool? How many Adventists can explain it? How long has it been a Christian belief?

This G.C. paradigm rests on the devil as playing a major part, first introduced to the Jews during their Persian Exile, and later became important in Christianity. Prior to that time, the Jews had only God as the agent of both good and evil. Did God divide his kingdom by allowing Satan to have certain areas where he could freely practice his wiles?

Glenn Hansen

Herb,
Luther inserted the word "alone" in his German translation because he believed that proper German required it. He appealed to the context to justify the idea that man is justified by faith alone:

"So much for translating and the nature of language. However, I was not depending upon or following the nature of the languages alone when I inserted the word solum in Romans 3. The text itself, and Saint Paul's meaning, urgently require and demand it. For in that passage he is dealing with the main point of Christian doctrine, namely, that we are justified by faith in Christ without any works of the Law. Paul excludes all works so completely as to say that the works of the Law, though it is God's law and word, do not aid us in justification. Using Abraham as an example, he argues that Abraham was so justified without works that even the highest work, which had been commanded by God, over and above all others, namely circumcision, did not aid him in justification. Rather, Abraham was justified without circumcision and without any works, but by faith, as he says in Chapter 4: "If Abraham were justified by works, he may boast, but not before God." So, when all works are so completely rejected — which must mean faith alone justifies — whoever would speak plainly and clearly about this rejection of works will have to say "Faith alone justifies and not works." The matter itself and the nature of language requires it." M. Luther, friend, colleague, and mentor of P Melanchthon.

Herb, If you disagree that people are justified by faith alone, which is what you certainly appear to be saying, why not just state it? Perhaps you should just clearly state that you prefer Rome to the Reformers on this subject. Just come clean and admit it.

The "conflict" between Luther and Melanchthon hardly bears serious consideration. Most of Melanchthon's problems began after Luther had died. Documents he wrote after the Protestant defeat at Marburg were considered too conciliatory.

Melanchthon's work during Luther's lifetime, while not always to Luther's taste, can not accurately be characterized as contradicting positions held by Luther. Can you be specific about problems in the Augsburg Confession in the sections on justification or faith and works?

As for James, a review of the Genesis account indicates that there was a great deal of time, [~12 and 30 years] between Abraham's justification by faith [in God's promise] and the offering of Isaac. So really, when James asks about Abraham being justified by works, the real answer is NO. Abraham wasn't justified by works. He was justified by faith when he believed and his faith was vindicated by his works.

As for AG Maxwell, one of his attacks on Luther is well documented on a tape made at an Adventist Forum meeting. I have posted a link to that tape on other threads. Sorry, I can't do it now.
WASC Responds to La Sierra University Problems

Submitted Jul 20, 2011
By Atoday News Team

In a letter dated, July 5, just released by La Sierra University (LSU), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the academic Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges & Universities in the Western United States, reported on the commission’s consideration of a report of its Special Visit team.

In part, the letter noted the following:

The Special Visit “came in the midst of a contentious public controversy over this matter [relating to the teaching of both evolutionary biology and creationism at LSU] between LSU and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with which La Sierra University is affiliated.”

“The goal of the Special Visit was to determine whether LSU was addressing this challenge in keeping with generally accepted principles of higher education related to institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and the appropriate roles of the faculty, administration and governing board.”

“The Special Visit team was concerned about the structure and functioning of the governing board” It noted that “there were divisions on the board concerning the controversy in the teaching of science.”

WASC noted that “the recent forced resignations, which were obtained through the actions of the board chair, reinforce concerns about institutional autonomy because of the multiple roles that the board chair has in the University and in the Church.”

As the result of “deep concerns about the institutional autonomy of La Sierra University as an educational institution,” WASC acted to issue a formal Notice of Concern.

Read the entire letter from WASC to LSU here:

Elaine Nelson

WASC will have the last word if LSU is to continue as a university.

Nathan Schilt

You are absolutely right, Elaine. Institutional Darwinian theory, as theorized by Nate Schilt, states that institutions will become extinct if they do not make adaptations necessary for growth and survival. If WASC expectations and demands interfere with institutional identity, identity will be
sacrificed in order for the institution to survive. In trying to adapt to the environment in which it lives, the ecclesiastical leadership at LSU will ironically be proving on the institutional level the very principle it seeks to discredit on the biological level - adaptation of species. Who knows? Darwinian theory may be twice vindicated at LSU.

Elaine Nelson

Evolution, inadvertently, will be proved if LSU survives.

Trevor Hammond

This is a classic example of how the 'state' has encroached and sought control of Christian education by 'forcing' adaptations upon the Church, much to the demise of Christianity in the West. Social Engineering at its best?

Let's face it 'evolution' has been thrust upon the Church and sadly capitalist economics is been used as the instrument of 'mass destruction' and 'torture' in order to 'brainwash' kids going to school to learn true science.

Would it appease those government fake science 'gurus' if creation AND evolution weren't taught in order to keep the funding from tax-money coming in? (Like Solomon's kill the both babies test?)

The state wants to force non-scientific evolution on schools. This exposes (to me) a clear indication of how the state IS controlling the Church at least in terms of education. There seems to be a very fine line dividing Church and State separation and the decider of that line seems to be in the hands of the State supporting false evolution science and all...

Kevin Riley

The church has always had to respond to the world in which it lives. That is why Paul addresses 1st century issues rather than our issues. I never realised until I started reading the history of the Christian church in the US in the nineteenth century just how much of our history was not just us and God, but us and the other churches and the world. I still believe God was involved in leading us, but the world was there too. We were responding to events around us, and ideas that were brought up by both the secular world (much smaller then) and other churches. When we want to we find ways to remain true to our beliefs and live in the world, when we don't want to, well, then we learn why we should.

Timo Onjukka

The opposite could reasonably be suggested:
(paraphrasing Kevin) "this is classic example how an institution (ie corporate church) has encroached and sought forcible singular control over issues best left to individual conscience and reason, much to the demise of free moral agency (that took a blood sacrifice to ratify)"

The church that fails to evolve, fails to recognize itself as one of the legs of a progressive movement towards infinite truth (instead installs itself as the only root, static) will itself go extinct. Yet, truth will march on, with, or without the corporate institution. Just go back to the "remnant church" as it rushed to Golgotha....

(more inverted paraphrase) "The church wants to force non-rational religion on society. "This seems to me clear indication the church wishes exclusive control of education, science, health, morality, truth"

If God gave me a querious mind, I suppose it was not just to be automaton...

"Nonetheless, Darwinism needs to be approached as more than just a pesky cultural menace. . . .There is no sense in pretending that there can be an easy theological response to the problem of evolution" (Stephen Webb, The Dome of Eden, 5).

A kairos God needing not "time", to meet with man, first created time. Man has ever since tried to trap God in his own finite chronos... It seems to me to be arrogance of highest order to believe that my time-based reality could know something as unknowable as mans first 168 hours. It is even higher treason to believe I have right to foreclose another persons questions, and the observable answers they seem to yield.

On a related note, it is also abundantly clear that Lucifer, desiring to be in the "Creation Tribunal" but thwarted in said desire, has worked tirelessly to confuse, to create mistrust, and to cast doubt on character of Creator. Perhaps the "church" has aided and abetted him in quite some diverse ways...

I suppose what I am attempting to say; my desire to prove my philosophy, theology, experience as "right" is my most condemning (and comforting) feature. This above everything leads me to abrogate all else...not in relativistic way, but in atavistic. When new information or questions cause convulsions in my conscience or consciousness, I hold my breath, close my eyes, and revert to familiar myopia...
Elaine Nelson

Trevor, the state has no "encroached and sought control of Christian education." On the contrary, LSU has requested WASC approval; and in granting that accreditation, there are certain stipulations that must be followed: quid pro quo.

The church and LSU is not being forced to divorce itself from its doctrines. Only if the school wants, and feels it necessary to have WASC approval, then certain demands are being made in order to receive that stamp of accreditation. It is completely voluntary, but just as one wants a loan to purchase a house AND receive legal financing, certain criteria must be met. We all live in a society where we daily must comply with rules; only in an anarchy are there no rules.

At any time, LSU could change it direction and become a "Bible College" and WASC would not be necessary.

Timo Onjukka

Not entirely "voluntary", Elaine. Without WASC, State/fed monies, and University status, LSU becomes a withering ghost.

Besides, the property is conference owned, not by LSU...

Sad to the lengths that a few disgraced and vocal persons have gone to hijack the University (and fabricate/foment the polarizing lie that evolution was taught as exclusively and having primacy over the creation narrative).

The real story is yet unheard.... and most have already swallowed the kidnap note and took the bait without investigation. Doesn't it just sound good to know I am "preserving truth" of creation by hating LSU? The flag hoisted on that pole by the real progenitors, and their purpose is in fact false-flag.

The sadder, and greater picture, is that it appears the GC may have failed on multiple occasions regarding opportunity for transparency, veracity, and disclosure, instead contracting ranks and circling the wagons around the pole, ostensibly afraid to rattle the already discontent tithe-paying constituents...? For certain, the (academic, and larger) world shakes its incredulous head at us, who believe we are all that, (and then some).

Overcliff Road

I'm not sure about this but I don't think WASC is a state agency. I believe it is a private service. Anybody know?
Elaine Nelson

5 days ago

From the official WASC site:

Why Accreditation?

Certification to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning

Validates the integrity of a school’s program and student transcripts
Fosters improvement of the school’s programs and operations to support student learning

Assures a school community that the school’s purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable educational program

A way to manage change through regular assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring and reassessment

Assists a school/district in establishing its priority areas for improvement as a result of the perpetual accreditation cycle.

Below are additional examples with respect to accreditation:

In December 2002 UC faculty approved a policy that requires all California public and private high schools to be WASC-accredited (or a candidate for accreditation) in order to establish and/or maintain an "a-g" course list.

Accreditation is required with respect to the Cal Grants.

The WASC/CDE (California Department of Education) process serves as the basis for the Single Plan for Student Achievement.

Colleges and universities examine transcripts to determine if the students have attended accredited institutions.

Teachers will not receive credit for the years during which they taught at a non-accredited school by many schools/districts nationwide. WASC receive calls from school personnel who are recruiting applicants for teaching positions with respect to their prior schools of employment.

The military recruiters expect the applicants to be from accredited schools.

Many districts have policies to accept credits only from WASC accredited schools or schools accredited by other regionals with whom WASC has reciprocal agreements.
By seeking accreditation and accepting state or federal research funding, the school opens itself up to regulation by the state and/or federal government. This is the danger of trying to have it both ways.

If you want to join the group, you must pay the dues. In seeking status as a full-fledged university, eligible to receive government funding, WASC accreditation was absolutely necessary.

Had the school only wanted to be a Bible college, this would have been unnecessary. It's hard to have one foot on either side of a river, and "having it both ways" meant that the church wanted both SDA board approval and WASC approval when it was impossible for both. The money is too important to the school for continued operation; and money is more powerful than ideology in such instances.

If I understand correctly, there is conflicting pressure from WASC and the AAA, with WHAT IS taught being the big issue for AAA (and the bulk of church leaders and probably of members) while WHO DECIDES is the primary issue for WASC.

Is this a proverbial irresistible force about to meet an immovable object? Is so, as the saying goes, "somethin's gotta give." One cannot help but wonder what.

Other church universities have been in similar circumstances-and been lost to the churches that founded them. Will La Sierra be the first SDA institution to go that route? Time will tell, but hopefully everybody involved will step back, take a long breath, consider the consequences of all possible choices, and pray for a solution that will prevent such a sad separation.

Such a travesty. WASC offers a 'catch 22'.

Fake Evolution Theory Science + funding = Accreditation
or True Science - Fake Evolution Theory Science = Relegation

T
The WASC concerns, as indicated in their letter of July 5, are procedural and governance. There was no attempt to tell the school what to teach. They specifically state in their letter that they do not contest the right of faith-based schools to teach the tenets of their faith. Their concern was that the board and especially the board chair did not follow appropriate procedures in the handling of the recent issues, and in some cases acted out of compliance with their own policies, as in the recent forced resignations, and in micromanaging curriculum issues which were the prerogative of the faculty as a whole. There were also concerns that the way the board is constituted allows too much outside interference with the board's authority to govern the school. A fair reading of the WASC letter does not reveal them to be the heavy hand of the secular state forcing the school to teach evolution instead of divine creation, which, by-the-way, the faculty of the school don't want to do either.